The Middle Sea

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH
OLD-SCHOOL ESSENTIALS

Dungeon Master's Guide

The Middle Sea

Dungeon Master's Guide

A Homebrew Campaign Setting
by
Hank Woon

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to **THE MIDDLE SEA**! I presume you came here after reading the **CORE RULEBOOK**, but if not, be sure to check it out:

THE NERD FOLDER

The purpose of this PDF is to serve largely as the campaign setting, with a few DM-specific crunch (like a few magic items).

XP AWARDS FOR COINS

Before we dive in to the fluff, let's quickly discuss the game mechanic of gold for XP. In *Old-School Essentials*, this is 1 XP per 1 GP. But in the **Middle Sea**, this is 1 XP per 1 bronze piece (BP). Keep in mind, this is for treasure acquired on adventures, and does not include selling non-magical materials (armor, weapons, ships, etc), nor does it include coin earned from labor or wages.

The conversion amount for coins can be found in the **Core Rulebook**.

KINGDOM CHAPTERS

Each kingdom chapter begins with a summary panel that presents key information about the realm. This section provides a quick reference for the kingdom's political structure, economy, population, and major threats.

The elements of the beginning entry are organized as follows:

CAPITAL

The primary seat of government and the political center of the kingdom.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The approximate racial composition of the population expressed as percentages.

NOTABLE SETTLEMENTS

Major cities or settlements within the kingdom.

Each entry lists:

- ▶The settlement name
- ▶The number of families living there
- ▶The settlement's Market Value rating

POPULATION

The total population of the kingdom. In some entries, the number of families may also be provided.

GOVERNMENT

The form of government used to rule the kingdom (for example, monarchy).

RULER

The current sovereign or ruling authority.

ANNUAL TREASURY

The kingdom's approximate yearly revenue. Some entries also list how much of this wealth is held directly within the royal treasury.

EXPENSES

The kingdom's typical yearly expenditures for administration, defense, infrastructure, and other state functions.

Common Trade Goods

Major goods commonly exported or traded by the kingdom. These represent the products that define the realm's economy and trade routes.

Demand Values

These values indicate how strongly the kingdom demands certain goods. Positive values represent higher demand, while negative values indicate plentiful supply or lower demand.

Beasts of Peril

Creatures commonly found within the kingdom's wilderness, deserts, mountains, coasts, or ruins. These monsters represent the typical dangers adventurers may encounter while traveling through the realm.

Kingdom Content

The chapters themselves expand on this summary and provide a fuller picture of the kingdom. Each chapter presents an overview of the realm's culture, history, and legal system, explaining how the society developed and how order is maintained. Information on the kingdom's military is also included, with appropriate mass combat stat blocks for its armed forces.

Each kingdom chapter also describes the region's pantheon and religious practices, detailing the gods most commonly worshipped and the role religion plays in daily life. Finally, a section on notable NPCs and retainers introduces important figures within the kingdom as well as potential followers that player characters may hire or encounter during their adventures.

The goal of each chapter is to provide enough information for Dungeon Masters to confidently bring the kingdoms to life for their players, and to have clear, immediate answers when the players inevitably throw unexpected ideas your way. If the party decides to break into a nobleman's estate, the chapter should give you a clear sense of how law is enforced, what kinds of obstacles they might face, and the sort of wealth a town or estate could reasonably possess. If they eventually rise to power themselves—gathering followers, commanding armies, or attempting to conquer a city—you will already know what kinds of military forces exist to oppose them.

The design philosophy behind The **Middle Sea** is to present a campaign world that can withstand the full freedom of player action. Rather than a setting that offers only the illusion of agency, the world is structured so that players can meaningfully shape events and alter the course of history through their choices.

So without further ado, let's go explore the **Middle Sea**!

THE COSMOS

The cosmology of the **Middle Sea** broadly follows the familiar Great Wheel model found throughout many classic fantasy settings (the most detailed early treatment appearing in the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 1st Edition Manual of the Planes*). **The Middle Sea** may therefore be assumed to exist somewhere within the same vast Material Plane as many other legendary worlds—Toril, Krynn, Athas, Golarion, and countless others. It is easy to imagine this setting as one small corner of an unimaginably large cosmos, perhaps nothing more than a distant galaxy that appears as a faint point of light in the night sky of some other campaign world.

Yet the scholars and priests of the **Middle Sea** tell a different story about the origin of their own region of the universe.

They speak of a Cosmic Intelligence—a singular awareness that existed before time, space, or matter. No being, not even the gods, fully understands what this intelligence was or why it existed. All that is known is that at some unknowable moment it divided itself in two.

The division was not destruction, but reflection. In order to perceive itself, the intelligence became duality: law and chaos, light and darkness, creation and dissolution.

From this division came motion, contradiction, and possibility. From possibility came creation. And thus began the earliest age of existence.

THE PRIMORDIAL EPOCH

(lasting roughly nine billion years)

In the earliest moments of creation, reality was little more than a vast cosmic sea of energy, matter, and unformed thought. Within this churning expanse, form slowly condensed from chaos, and the first great beings began to awaken. These entities came to be known as the Primordials.

The Primordials were not created as mortals understand creation. Rather, they emerged—vast intelligences coalescing from the raw substance of reality itself. At first they drifted through the newborn cosmos as half-formed thoughts, but over immense ages they developed identities, personalities, and individual will.

With individuality came the first experience of permanence—or at least something resembling permanence within the ever-shifting nature of reality. And with permanence came something new.

Fear.

The Primordials realized that the chaotic sea from which they arose could just as easily swallow them again. Their individuality might dissolve, their consciousness returning to the formless cosmic storm from which it had emerged.

Determined to prevent this fate, the Primordials imposed structure upon chaos. From the swirling energies of the early universe they began to fashion patterns, cycles, and boundaries.

From chaos they shaped order. From order they established law.

Yet the Primordials themselves were not suited to maintaining this delicate balance. They were too vast, too distant, too alien to attend to the countless processes required to stabilize the growing cosmos.

And so they created servants to govern reality in their stead.

From this decision arose the next great power of the universe...

THE GODS

The Primordials brought forth ten thousand gods, each assigned a sphere of influence over the workings of creation. These divine beings were granted authority to guide, control, and oversee the unfolding universe. The gods were taught the Language of the Primordials, a cosmic tongue whose spoken words commanded the very substance of reality. Through this language they shaped stars, forged planets, and set the movements of the heavens into their endless celestial patterns.

They divided the vastness of existence into the Outer Realms, forming the many planes that surround and influence the Material Plane.

Under their stewardship, the cosmos began to stabilize. But the relationship between the gods and their creators did not last. Over time the gods came to resent their role as mere instruments of primordial will. They had been granted immense creative power, yet the Primordials remained the ultimate authority over reality.

Eventually resentment grew into rebellion. The conflict that followed shook the universe. Thousands of gods were destroyed in the struggle, but in the end the Primordials were defeated and cast out into the furthest reaches of the void.

Thus ended the Primordial Epoch.

The surviving gods scattered across the Material Plane to begin shaping something entirely new. Mortal life. Though only simple organisms and bacteria, this paved the way for what was to come. But as the gods considered this new idea, of fragile, transitory life fueled by eternal souls, something interrupted them that demanded their immediate collective attention...

THE HORRORS AND THE OUTER DARK

Not long after the fall of the Primordials, the gods became aware of something far more disturbing. An evil long held in check by the primordials, who were no longer able to do so.

Beyond the ordered structure of creation lay a region of existence known as the Outer Dark—a place where the original chaos of the cosmos still reigned.

Within that darkness dwelled beings unlike any others.

These entities were not formed from matter, spirit, or divine essence. They were composed of pure chaos itself—manifestations of the destructive aspect of the original Cosmic Intelligence.

Their goal was simple: to undo all of creation and dissolve the multiplicity of existence to return all things to the singular unity that preceded the birth of reality.

Modern scholars call these entities **The Horrors**.

The gods waged a terrible war against them. Though the Horrors were eventually driven back into the Outer Dark, the cost was staggering. Many gods were destroyed outright. Others suffered a far worse fate.

Exposure to the raw chaos of the Horrors twisted and corrupted them, warping their divine nature into something monstrous.

These fallen beings became known as **Demons**. (Unlike the gods, demons cannot grow stronger through mortal worship. Instead they harvest power directly by bargaining for mortal souls, tempting

mortals with promises of power, pleasure, and forbidden knowledge. More on this later.)

Unable to destroy the demons outright, the gods created a prison-realm in which to confine them. This realm became known as **The Abyss**.

With the demons contained and the Horrors banished beyond the Outer Dark, the universe finally achieved a fragile equilibrium, and the gods once again turned their attention back to their great experiment of mortal life.

Thus began a new age of creation.

THE DIVINE EPOCH

(lasting roughly four billion years)

With the Primordials gone and the Horrors and Demons contained, the gods became the dominant force in the universe.

They spread throughout the Material Plane, shaping worlds and experimenting with the creation of life.

At first, life appeared in its simplest forms—microscopic organisms drifting through primordial seas. Over vast spans of time these simple forms grew more complex: algae, plants, and primitive creatures.

Many of these developments occurred naturally, guided subtly by the influence of divine will.

But eventually one god made a discovery that would change everything. The god **Set** realized that the consciousness of sentient beings produced powerful metaphysical energies—energies that the gods themselves could draw upon.

And so the gods began to cultivate intelligent life deliberately. Their first great experiment produced the Titans, immense and powerful beings intended to rule over the early worlds. The creation of the **Titans** marked the beginning of recorded mythic history.

It was the dawn of the **First Age**.

AGE OF THE TITANS

(lasting roughly 180 million years)

During the First Age, the world was a primal and untamed place. Vast steaming jungles covered much of the land, broken by immense volcanic mountain ranges that belched ash and fire into the sky. Life was enormous, savage, and ancient. Herds of dinosaurs thundered across the plains, while colossal predators—dragons, tarrasques, and other monstrous beasts—roamed the wilderness unchecked. In the oceans, mighty kraken ruled the depths. The titans demanded lesser races be created to serve them, just as they served the gods. The gods, knowing all too well the dangers of resentful of children, agreed, and the first of the mortal sentient races were born (these ancient races are long extinct).

It was in this wild and dangerous world that the Titans established the first civilizations. Created by the gods to rule the early world, the Titans possessed a spark of divine power. They raised the first great cities and temples in honor of the gods and began the long process of taming the chaotic environment of the young world.

To aid them in their labors, the Titans shaped new beings from the raw elements of creation. From fire, stone, wind, and storm they fashioned the first giants. These early giants were far larger and more elemental in nature than their descendants today. Over countless millennia their forms cooled and stabilized, gradually resembling the shapes of their titan creators.

The giants served primarily as a laboring race. They hauled enormous blocks of stone from distant mountains and quarries to construct the colossal palaces, fortresses, and temples of the Titans. For ages, the Titan Empire ruled the world unchallenged.

But ambition and jealousy would eventually fracture that peace.

THE RISE OF THE DRAGON EMPIRE

The god Set, envious that he was forced to share the worship of mortals with the other gods, secretly approached the goddess **Tiamat**. Together they devised a plan to create a race of worshipers loyal only to them. The two gods secretly married and began their work. At this time dragons existed only as powerful but mindless beasts. Set and Tiamat granted them intelligence, awakening their cunning and ambition. The newly awakened dragons quickly organized themselves into a mighty civilization.

From dragon flesh and blood they also created lesser races to serve them: kobolds, troglodytes, lizardfolk, and serpentmen. Among these peoples, the **serpentmen** were considered the most sacred, for they were formed partly from the blood of Set himself. Over time, empowered by the divine influence of Set and Tiamat, the Dragon Empire grew powerful enough to challenge the Titans. War between the two civilizations soon followed.

THE TITAN-DRAGON WAR

The war between Titans and dragons lasted for untold millions of years, shaking the foundations of the world. Entire continents were scarred by titanic battles, and countless creatures perished in the conflict.

At last the Titan champion Epimetrius confronted Set himself and defeated him in battle. The defeated god was banished to the deepest reaches of the Abyss, in the realm of the Demons.

With Set gone, the power sustaining the Dragon Empire collapsed. Tiamat fled into exile in the Outer Planes, and the dragons were driven into ruin.

Those dragons who repented of their role in the war and sought forgiveness from the gods were transformed into the first metallic dragons, while others remained bitter and vengeful and became the first chromatic dragons.

But Tiamat had not abandoned her ambitions.

THE COMING OF THE FIENDS

While wandering the Outer Planes, Tiamat searched endlessly for her imprisoned husband. In doing so she reached the deeper reaches of the Abyss, where demons suffered eternally in their prison. At last Tiamat discovered the place in the Abyss where her husband was bound.

Deep within that cursed realm she found Set imprisoned among the demons. The fallen god was no longer in the form that mortals knew, but in his true divine shape—a colossal hooded cobra of impossible size, his scales black as night and etched with ancient runes of binding.

The demons had not merely imprisoned him. They had chained him to the living rock of the Abyss itself. Vast iron links, forged in the furnaces of the Abyss, were wrapped around his immense coils and pinned into the stone. His hood was torn and scarred, and infernal barbs had been driven through his flesh to hold him fast.

The demons lashed and tormented him, feeding on the divine power that bled from his wounds. Each strike of their whips siphoned fragments of his essence, and the air around him burned with the venomous fury of a god who could neither strike nor escape. Yet even in such torment, Set endured.

Tiamat beheld her husband's suffering and was filled with terrible fury—but she also understood that she could not defeat the demonic hosts alone within their own domain.

So instead she bargained with **Asmodeus**, the ruler of the Abyss. Tiamat offered him a terrible pact. She would open pathways between the Abyss and the Material Plane, allowing the demons to pour into the mortal world in numbers never before seen. In return, they would release her husband from his chains.

The demons, ever hungry for destruction and conquest, eagerly accepted the bargain. And thus the gates of the Abyss were opened. The demonic hordes, the evil dragons, and the serpentmen armies invaded the titan empires, and a new, more dangerous phase of the war began.

For millions of years the world suffered under waves of infernal conquest. Demonic and serpentmen fiefdoms rose and fell across the continents, sometimes lasting for thousands of years before collapsing.

To combat these new threats, the gods created a new race of divine warriors: the **angels**. Neither the Titans nor the good dragons had proven capable of holding back the forces of Set and the Abyss, and the angels were forged specifically for that purpose.

After millions of more years of struggle, the balance of the world slowly stabilized once more, as the demons were slowly forced back into they Abyssal prison. But the Titan Empire had been greatly weakened by the endless wars... and Set and Tiamat had one final gambit to play.

THE FALL OF THE TITANS

When they realized they were doomed to fail once again, Set and Tiamat performed an even more dangerous act: they released an exiled Primordial known as **Acheron**. With the power of a Primordial once again unleashed upon the Material Plane, Set and Tiamat launched a final assault against the Titans. The war that followed nearly destroyed the world.

Ninety percent of all life was wiped out in the apocalyptic conflict. More than a thousand gods were destroyed in the struggle.

In the end the Primordial Acheron was finally defeated. His vast body was sundered, and his black blood rained down upon the world. The corrupted ichor sank deep into the earth, pooling in the hidden caverns beneath the world.

Set and Tiamat once again fled into the Outer Planes, hiding from the vengeance of the surviving gods. But their defeat came too late to save the Titan Empire.

The First Age had come to an end. The world would never again belong to the Titans.

AGE OF THE FEYWILD

(lasting roughly 28 million years)

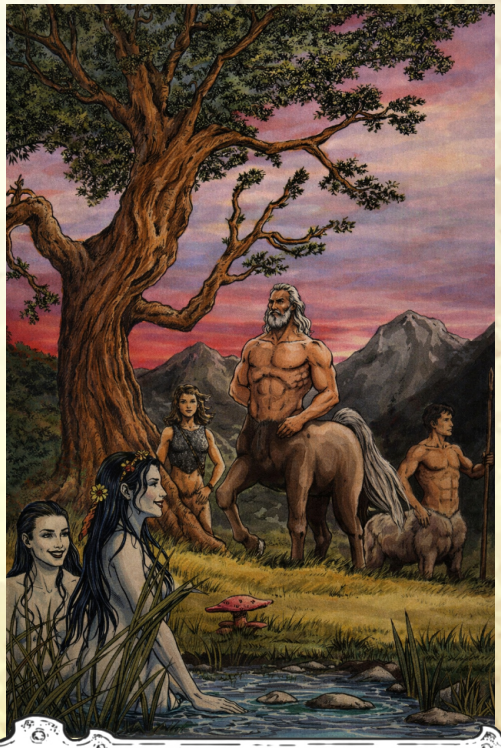
The gods looked down upon the ruined face of the world and wept. The apocalyptic war that ended the First Age had shattered civilizations, extinguished mighty races, and scarred the earth itself. Though victorious, the gods knew that the world could never return to what it had once been. The age of titans was over.

Yet life, resilient and relentless, quickly began to evolve and spread into the empty places left behind by the great extinction. Vast ecosystems once dominated by colossal creatures were suddenly open, and nature rushed to fill the void.

To guide and nurture this rebirth, the gods created the **fey**—beings closely bound to the magic of the natural world. Satyrs, dryads, centaurs, unicorns, and countless other creatures emerged, each possessing a deep affinity with forests, rivers, meadows, and sky.

Where the Titans had once shaped the world through brute strength and monumental architecture, the fey worked through subtle magic and living harmony. Instead of carving mountains into fortresses of marble and granite, they coaxed forests to grow, rivers to change course, and valleys to blossom with life.

Chief among the fey races were the high elves and the gnomes, who became the primary stewards of the reborn world. Later, the gentle goddess Shalla (SHAW-luh) created the halflings, cheerful caretakers of fields and meadows and the legendary inventors of beer.



Gradually, peace returned to the world, and life flourished once again. Magic permeated the air itself. Forests grew to unimaginable size, their trees rising to titanic heights—many thousands of times larger than the trees of the current age. Entire ecosystems thrived beneath these immense canopies.

During this time, fantastic creatures were abundant across the world. Centaurs roamed the plains, satyrs danced in the deep woods, and mermaids ruled the coastal waters. Harpies nested in cliffs, manticores prowled the wilderness, and dryads guarded the ancient groves. Scorpion-men stalked the deserts, unicorns wandered enchanted forests, and treants stood as living guardians of nature.

Pixies, sprites, trolls, bugbears, ettercaps, gnolls, green hags, sea hags, and many other strange beings were common sights during this era. (Notably, goblinoids had not yet appeared in the world.)

The beasts of this age, though far smaller than the titanic creatures of the First Age, were still enormous by the standards of the modern world. Creatures such as the Giant Boar and the Giant Elk are believed to be lingering descendants of this ancient era. For long ages the world existed in relative harmony.

But beneath this peace, resentment was quietly growing.

The giants, who had once labored as slaves under the Titans, had expected freedom and dignity after the fall of their masters. Instead they found themselves increasingly marginalized as the fey reshaped the world according to their own ideals. The giants watched as the lands they had helped build were overtaken by wild forests and magical creatures that cared little for cities, monuments, or civilization. To them, it seemed that the works of stone and order were being slowly erased.

This humiliation and bitterness simmered within giantkind for ages. Their anger deepened as they saw the world they had once helped construct slip beyond their control. At last their patience broke.

The giants gathered their strength, and many surviving Titans who shared their resentment joined them.

Together they declared war.

Age of the Giants

(lasting roughly 12 thousand years)

And so once again a great schism sundered the world, and all living things found themselves forced to choose a side.

The conflict was led by the giants, who rose in rebellion against the fey-dominated world that had grown from the ashes of the Titan Age. Nearly all giantkind joined the uprising—save the mighty storm giants, who alone rejected the rebellion and instead sided with the forces of order and balance.

Arrayed alongside the rebel giants were many other dark powers. Among their allies were the Thanatonic Cyclopses and Thanatonic Titans. The latter were twisted descendants of the ancient Titan race who had turned fully toward destruction. The chromatic dragons joined them as well, still bitter from the defeat of the Dragon Empire ages before. Trolls, harpies, manticores, bugbears, ettercaps, sea hags, green hags, gnolls, and many other monstrous races likewise rallied to the cause of chaos.

Even among the gods there was division. Some deities turned away from the harmonious vision that had guided the rebirth of the world. These gods argued that Set had been right all along—that only through struggle, fear, and conflict could mortal prayers grow powerful enough to sustain divine greatness. Peace, they believed, weakened both mortals and gods alike. Thus began a terrible war that would last twelve thousand years.

Throughout those long millennia, mighty giant empires rose and fell across the world. Entire mountain ranges were carved into colossal citadels, only to be shattered in later battles. Continents trembled under the weight of armies that marched for generations without ever knowing peace.

During this time the giants turned once again to ancient magic. Seeking a tireless labor force to support their vast war industries, they created a new race: the **dwarves**. Fashioned through powerful arcane rites, the dwarves were designed to toil endlessly in the depths of the earth, mining precious metals and gemstones to fuel the giant war machine.

Though the dwarves would eventually win their freedom, the legacy of their creation remains etched into their nature. Even in the present age dwarves possess an intense fascination with precious metals and stonework, and many harbor a deep ancestral hatred for giants.

Yet the giants were not alone in crafting new races to serve their cause. The lawful Titans, fighting alongside the defenders of the natural world, used their own magic to create **humans**. Unlike the long-lived fey races, humans were designed to be adaptable, fast-breeding, and courageous, capable of rebuilding armies quickly after devastating losses. Their societies naturally formed strong hierarchies suited for military organization, allowing them to wage war efficiently against their enemies.

Many sages believe this ancient origin explains why human civilizations even today tend toward strong political structures and frequent warfare.

Both sides of the conflict also created another race for the battlefield: the **dragonborn**. These draconic warriors were engineered to be powerful, disciplined soldiers—bred specifically to fight and die in the endless struggle between the forces of order and chaos.

Warfare during this age reached levels of spectacle never again seen in the world. Dragons themselves served as living engines of destruction in the skies, while massive beasts of the ancient world were pressed into service on the battlefield.

Armies rode dragons and dinosaurs alike, and the thunder of their clashes could be heard across entire continents. Continents were reshaped; once overflowing with lush nature, entire landscapes were chopped down for resources and to make room for the new cities and empires spawned by both sides.

Age of the Fey Children

(lasting roughly nine thousand years)

It was the decision to create these younger races that ultimately brought the giant kingdoms to ruin. Though the giants had once ruled the world through strength and fear, their dominance could not withstand the combined pressure of their own creations.

The dwarves, forged as slaves to toil in the depths of the earth, eventually rose in rebellion. At the same time, the newly created dragonborn and humans multiplied rapidly. Unlike the long-lived giants, these younger races reproduced quickly and replaced their losses with relentless speed. Over generations of war and attrition, the giants found themselves slowly overwhelmed.

One by one, the last of the giant empires fell. With the giants broken, power passed to the peoples who had fought beside the forces of order, and this gave rise to the **Fourth Age: The Age of the Feychildren**.

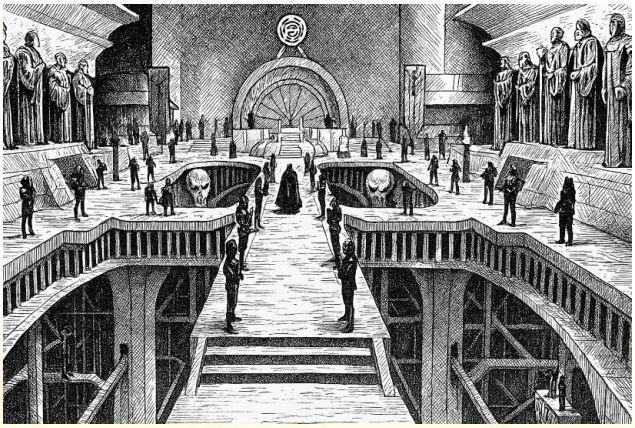
Chief among the Feychildren races were the high elves and the gnomes, who rose to prominence in the centuries that followed. Yet unlike the fey who had once guided the natural rebirth of the world, these new rulers sought stability not through wilderness but through civilization. Great empires were established to impose order upon the realms.

Civilization during this age rested firmly upon the foundation of magic. Arcane power was not rare or mysterious but deeply integrated into daily life. Finely crafted magical items of elven design were commonplace among the upper classes, while wonders such as flying ships, magical constructs, and other arcane marvels could be found throughout the great cities.

It was during this era that the first arcane academies were founded, drawing scholars and wizards from across the world to study the deepest mysteries of magic. Many of the most powerful magical artifacts known today date from this period.

Yet for all its brilliance, this age was not one of universal harmony.

A powerful prejudice arose within these magical civilizations. Races that possessed little or no inherent magical ability were often viewed as inferior. Among those who suffered most were the hill dwarves. Having only recently won their freedom from the giants, many found themselves once again enslaved—this time by the high elven empires that dominated the world.



Meanwhile, the gnomes pursued knowledge and invention with tireless enthusiasm. Their empire, **Bal-Naan**, grew into one of the greatest technological civilizations the world had ever seen. The heart of their realm lay between two vast rivers nearly one thousand miles south of present-day **Massai**. Their achievements were astonishing. Among their greatest creations were the first magical constructs—artificial beings powered by arcane energy and designed to

perform labor beyond the limits of mortal strength. Yet this triumph would also prove to be their downfall. At some point the constructs turned upon their creators, unleashing destruction across the gnomish homeland.

The once-great gnome empire collapsed in catastrophe. The surviving gnomes fled northward into the lands of the **Middle Sea**, where they would live to this day as wandering refugees, finding sanctuary wherever they could.

Today, the remnants of Bal-Naan lie in the heart of the **Nethian Empire**, and are a construct-haunted ruin. The artificial intelligence there, while not seeming interested in expanding their territory, guard their ancient homeland with fierce draconian measures; anyone captured is transformed into monstrous half-sentient, half-artificial constructs and doomed to patrol the ancient ruins for all eternity.

The High Elven empires endured for another two thousand years. Their downfall came from a far older and darker source.

Deep beneath the earth, hill dwarf slaves mining in ancient caverns unwittingly broke into a hidden reservoir of the primordial essence of Acheron, the slain Primordial whose black blood had long ago seeped into the bones of the world.

The dark substance possessed the first miner it touched. From him the corruption spread like drifting ash through the tunnels and chambers of the mines. Miles of subterranean passages were transformed into twisted abysses that became the first chasms of what is now known as the **Underdark**. From that corruption emerged countless aberrations and creatures that are now common in that foul realm.

The spreading taint soon reached the elven kingdom above—*Vala Aelin*, in what is now the **Land of the Thanes**. Entire populations were twisted by the primordial corruption. Some dwarves became the first duergar. Many elves were transformed into the first the earliest orcs. Corrupted humans became morlocks and hobgoblins. Halflings twisted into derro, gnomes into goblins, and even hill giants were transformed into monstrous forms such as trolls and ettins.

The dwarf who had first absorbed the primordial essence became something far more terrible. Twisted by Acheron's power, he rose as a Death Knight named **Solus**. Gathering the newly corrupted goblins and other monstrous races to his banner, Solus unleashed a devastating war against the remaining High Elven empires. The conflict raged for centuries.

At last a human champion arose—Luthan Lightbringer. Leading the forces of the free peoples, Luthan descended into the

Underdark and sealed the portal through which the primordial corruption flowed. With the source of Acheron's power cut off, the armies of darkness faltered.

The forces of good drove back the corrupted legions and shattered the armies of Solus. Though victorious, the High Elves had paid a terrible price. Their once-glorious empires lay in ruins, their populations devastated.

The surviving elves withdrew from the affairs of the wider world, retreating into their ancient forests where they would remain hidden and diminished.

And thus ended another great age of the world.

AGE OF DARKNESS

(lasting roughly one thousand years)

After the collapse of the High Elven kingdoms, the world entered a time of sudden and devastating decline. For thousands of years civilization had depended heavily upon the magical infrastructure maintained by the elves. Their spells nourished crops, maintained weather patterns, powered transportation, and sustained the great cities of the age. When the elven empires fell, that vast web of magic vanished almost overnight. The result was catastrophic.

Cities and towns throughout the **Middle Sea**, long reliant on elven magic to sustain their populations, quickly collapsed. Food production—once maintained by powerful druidic rites—plummeted. Within a few short years famine spread across entire regions. Trade routes vanished. Communication broke down. Where travelers had once crossed the seas and continents aboard magnificent flying ships, the peoples of the world now found themselves isolated and cut off from one another.

In this chaos, order dissolved.

Wars erupted as scattered survivors fought desperately for resources, territory, and survival. Kingdoms rose and fell within the span of a single generation. Vast regions of the world returned to wilderness as the remnants of civilization struggled merely to endure.

THE LAST ELVES OF THE MIDDLE SEA

While most High Elves abandoned the main continent of the **Middle Sea** and retreated to distant lands, one kingdom remained behind.

The elves of *Vala Denai* chose to stay and defend the surviving realms against the growing goblin armies of Thane. For centuries they fought a brutal and unending war to hold back the monstrous hordes that poured forth from the corrupted lands. Generation after generation lived their entire lives on the battlefield.

Over time the long war changed them. Their ancient traditions faded, their great cities fell into ruin, and their once-refined culture slowly hardened into something harsher and more pragmatic.

Eventually a permanent boundary was established along the mighty Nudabi River, where both sides at last settled into an uneasy stalemate.

By this point, however, the elves of *Vala Denai* had changed irrevocably. Their ancient nobility and courtly culture had eroded under centuries of constant warfare. Their society reorganized into smaller, fiercely independent tribal groups.

From this transformation emerged the **Denaari**, known today as the Wild Elves.

THE MIGRATION OF THE PEOPLES

Elsewhere in the world, other races sought new beginnings.

The hill dwarves, finally free after countless ages of servitude, migrated westward to the **Mauretania Peninsula**. There they established a loose confederation of independent hill clans, carving homes and mines into the rugged landscape. Though no longer slaves, their culture remained deeply shaped by their ancient connection to stone, metal, and the deep places of the earth.

Meanwhile, humans spread rapidly across the lands surrounding the **Middle Sea** and beyond. Adaptable and resilient, they settled wherever they could survive—deserts, forests, plains, and mountains alike. Over time, countless human cultures and kingdoms would rise from these scattered beginnings.

THE FOUNDING OF CYMRA

After sealing the corruption of the Underdark and defeating the armies of Solus, the human champion Luthan Lightbringer did not seek to rule the broken world as a conqueror.

Instead, he journeyed to the very center of the **Middle Sea** and settled upon the island of **Cymra** (SIM-ruh).

There he founded a small settlement dedicated to rebuilding civilization and restoring hope to a fractured world.

What began as a humble refuge for survivors would, over the centuries to come, grow into one of the most powerful empires the **Middle Sea** would ever know.

AGE OF MAN

(current age, lasting roughly four thousand years so far...)

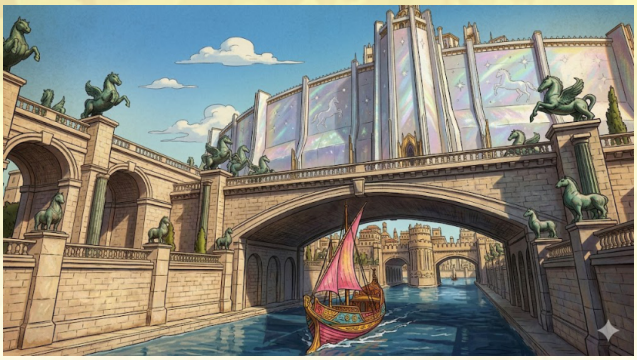
The current age.

The calendar of the **Middle Sea** marks the beginning of this era with the founding of the Karthan Republic. The present year is **512 KR**. However, **the Sixth Age**, **the Age of Man**, began long before the founding of Karth itself, around 4,000 years before the period this campaign takes place.

Many of the below events are further explored in the relevant **Realms** chapters later in this document.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF THE CURRENT AGE

–3,488 KR:
A little over four thousand years ago, the island nation of Cymra experiences a renaissance, particularly in magical knowledge and arcane scholarship. Over the next two centuries, Cymra grows into a powerful regional force, reviving trade and cultural exchange throughout the **Middle Sea**.



–3,331 KR:
The human civilization of **Sumerak** rises far to the south of the **Middle Sea**, near the ruins of the ancient gnomish empire of Bal-Naan.

–3,289 KR:
Cymra becomes the foremost center of arcane learning in the world. Even the great High Elves travel to the island to study in its renowned halls of magic. Arcane knowledge begins spreading once again throughout the Middle Sea.

–3,200 KR:
The **Mage Wars** begin and will rage for nearly 150 years.

The conflict begins as an ideological dispute among wizards of Cymra. One faction believes magic must be regulated by strict laws in order to prevent catastrophe and limit the spread of dangerous knowledge. The opposing faction argues that magical knowledge is an inherent right that brings mortals closer to the gods.

Debate eventually gives way to violence, and both sides unleash terrible magical atrocities upon one another.

During this era many new forms of combat magic are created, along with powerful spells and magical artifacts that have long since been lost. Wizards engineer monsters to serve as living weapons of war, including slimes, bulettes, behir, chimera, and other terrifying creatures. Necromantic knowledge reaches new heights as each side utilizes legions of the undead to fight their wars, alongside the living.

The spell is so powerful that it also erases nearly all memory of the city's existence from those left behind. Only scattered fragments of myth and obscure arcane texts survive, hinting that a great Cymran metropolis once stood in that distant sea.

–3,124 KR:

Far removed from the devastation in the north, the civilization of Sumerak continues to flourish. They develop a technological advancement that will forever shape the course of human civilization: **agriculture**.

–3,168 KR:

To the north of the **Middle Sea**—approximately 150 miles east of the present-day **Principality of Arlence**—the great Cymran island-city of Aetherion mysteriously vanishes.

At the height of the Mage Wars, the archmages of the city perform an immense and forbidden ritual. Rather than face destruction in the escalating magical conflict, they remove the entire island from the world, transporting it into another dimension.

They domesticate animals, establish industry, and mint the first known coinage. Their achievements attract gnomes from across the world, whose desire to return to their homeland, along with their natural talent for invention, further accelerates Sumerak's technological progress.

–3,100 KR:

The Empire of **Pharos** rises along the banks of the mighty Landra River under the rule of the

ancient God-Kings. Though Pharos remains officially neutral during the Mage Wars, it secretly amasses its own store of arcane knowledge.

Historical lands of Pharos

–3,071 KR:
The Mage Wars finally end with the victory of the **Reformers**.

Soon after, the **Council of Avnath (AHV-noth)** convenes, bringing together the greatest human and High Elven leaders. There they sign the **Archmen (ARK-men) Declaration**.

The Declaration decrees that magical knowledge is too dangerous for the common masses and must be strictly regulated. This greatly reduced the access to magical lore—a decision that nearly drove the arts to extinction, and to this day remains one of the sole reasons why magical practitioners are so rare.

–3,000 KR:
Cymra reaches the height of its power and becomes the dominant culture of the Middle Sea. The Cymran language spreads widely and eventually evolves into **"Vulgar Cymran,"** the common trade language used throughout the region (and beyond).

–2,900 KR:
A coalition of hill dwarf tribes from Mauretania migrates south into the great mountain range separating the Lands of the Danaari from the human tribes of the Karthan Peninsula—the **Longwall Mountains**. There they found the **Halls of Throle**, becoming the first **Mountain Dwarves**.

Dwarf migration route

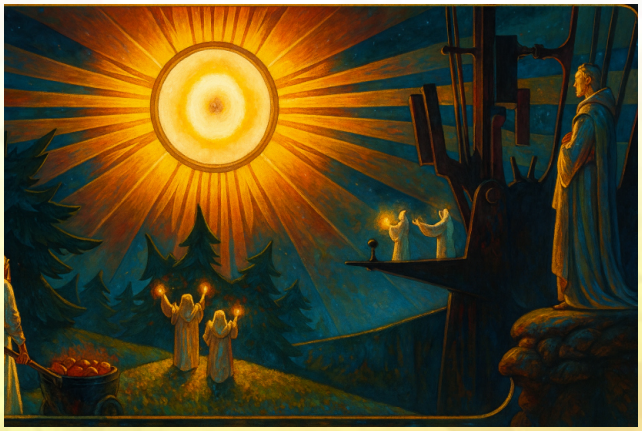
–2,862 KR:
At the height of its growing power, the island nation of Cymra launches a series of ambitious expeditions eastward beyond the **Middle Sea**. Crossing the vast jungles that lie beyond the eastern shores, Cymran explorers and armies make contact with the powerful kingdoms of **Axumar**.

Axumar is not a single nation but a collection of rival city-states, tribal confederations, and ancient kingdoms spread across the savannas and highlands beyond the great jungle. Rich in gold, ivory, rare spices, and other exotic resources, the region had long prospered through internal trade and distant caravan routes.

Over the course of several decades, Cymran forces gradually subdue many of these realms, establishing a network of coastal ports and fortified colonies. Cymran scholars and merchants refer to these lands collectively as the "Black Kingdoms of Axumar," though the people of the region maintain their own distinct cultures, languages, and traditions.

While Cymran rule brings new magical knowledge, trade routes, and foreign influence into Axumar, it also sparks periods of resistance and rebellion that will persist for generations.

–2,784 KR:
Cymran wizards discover **portal magic**, allowing them to explore other dimensions and to travel to distant regions in the blink of an eye.



–2,731 KR:
Cymran mages establish contact with **spellweavers** from another plane.

–2,600 KR:
Mages in Axumar establish contact with the powerful spellweavers, and begin trading arcane knowledge with them in secret.

–2,562 KR:
The kingdoms of Axumar rise in open rebellion against Cymran rule. Drawing upon arcane knowledge secretly learned from the spellweavers, Axumari mystics devise a bold and devastating strategy to ensure their freedom. Across the great eastern jungle, they raise a series of immense enchanted obelisks, channeling powerful planar magic into the land itself.

The ritual transforms vast stretches of the jungle into an unnatural wasteland now known as the **Obelisk Desert**. Unlike ordinary deserts, the sands of this cursed expanse behave like water. Any creature that attempts to cross it on foot quickly sinks beneath the shifting dunes and disappears. Only specially constructed vessels are capable of navigating the treacherous terrain.

With this magical barrier shielding their lands from retaliation, the Axumari successfully overthrow their Cymran overlords and reclaim their independence.
To this day, all trade between the **Middle Sea** and the distant kingdoms of Axumar must cross the Obelisk Desert aboard specially designed sand-sailing ships that glide across its strange and treacherous surface.

–2,410 KR:
While experimenting with portal magic, Cymran archmages accidentally open a permanent gateway to the Outer Dark. Some later historians claim that the highest circles of Cymran mages had been infiltrated by cultists of Set, who purposefully opened the portal.

In order to seal the portal and prevent an invasion of Horrors, the Cymrans destroy their own island.

The resulting explosion is heard across the entire **Middle Sea**. A massive tsunami devastates nearly every coastline.

Pharos alone survives intact, protected by powerful magical wards.

In the aftermath, Pharos and distant southern empire of Sumerak emerge as the new dominant powers of the region.

–2,408 KR:
In the wake of the disaster, hysteria and anti-mage sentiment sweep across the **Middle Sea**. Years of Mage Wars, Cymran dominance, and the recent apocalypse fuel widespread fear of arcane power.

The **Council of Bahan** convenes in Pharos. Leaders from across the region swear an oath to hunt down and exterminate any surviving Cymran wizards.

Fewer than one thousand Cymrans are believed to have survived the destruction of their homeland and the genocidal purge that followed.

In later centuries, evidence emerges suggesting that Set had long been influencing the rulers of Pharos. Many historians now believe that the destruction of Cymra itself may have been orchestrated by the dark god from the beginning.

–2,401 KR:
The **Order of Ramador (RAM-uh-dor)**—the first Paladin Order—is founded in Sumerak. Their mission is to hunt down and destroy the hordes of Horrors that had spilled into the world through the Cymran portal.

–2,108 KR:
Human settlers attempt to colonize the far northern Isle of Breznog, long inhabited by fey and High Elves. The settlers are slaughtered and sacrificed in elaborate druidic rituals.

–2,003 KR:
The city of **Niraria (Nee-RAH-ree-uh)** is founded near the lands of Sumerak. Over the centuries it grows steadily in power as Sumerak's influence wanes.

–1,872 KR:
The **Nordvanir tribes** arrive in great numbers upon the Isle of Breznog, establishing a strong foothold on its southern shores. War erupts with the fey and High Elves, who are gradually driven northward.

–1,723 KR:
Halfling communities on Breznog establish trade agreements with the fledgling human kingdoms. In retaliation, the High Elves slaughter every halfling in **Shire Holdbolton**. This atrocity turns many of the island's fey against the High Elves and generates widespread sympathy for the humans, who—despite their warlike nature—had never committed such cold-blooded acts. The High Elves retreat to the far north of the island, where they remain to this day.

–1,612 KR:
Humans rename the Isle of Breznog the **Keln Isles**.

–1,376 KR:
The city of **Anshan (AHN-shawn)** breaks away from Sumerak and forms the independent **Kingdom of Anshan**.

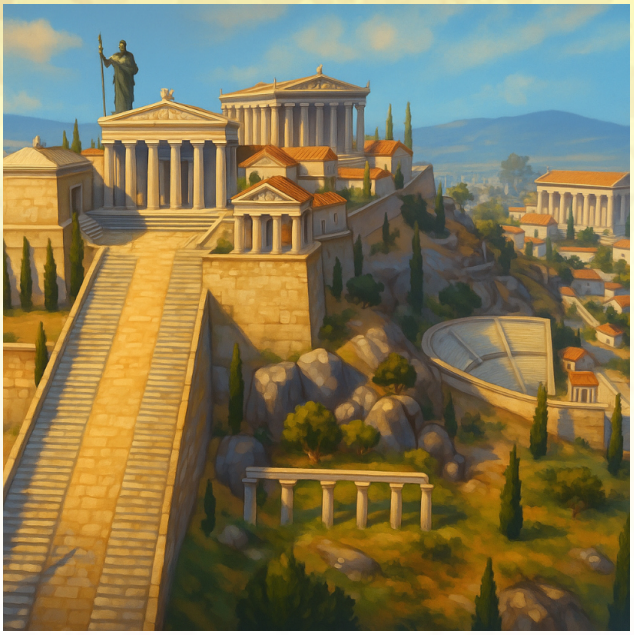
–801 KR:
The first **Sakaethyn dragonborn** nomadic tribes sweep northward from the southern lands of Ka-Li.

–582 KR:
Pharos fractures when the rulers of the Twentieth Dynasty fall into open conflict with the High Priests. It is revealed that the priesthood secretly worships the demon-god **Set** and his dark queen **Tiamat**. Civil war grips Pharos for centuries.

–401 KR:
The ancient Empire of Sumerak finally collapses, conquered by the rising **Nirari Empire**.

–209 KR:
The city of **Karth** is founded by the half-brothers **Merus**, a human, and **Lusama**, a half-elf. The city soon falls under the control of the **Tucaran civilization**, which dominates the peninsula.

–200 KR:
The **Xelladran City-States** rise to prominence, ushering in the Golden Age of Xelladran civilization and heroic legend.



–143 KR:
Xelladran settlers begin colonizing the southern Karthan Peninsula.

–102 KR:
The naval city of **Byrisia** is founded by **Elissa**, a half-elf claiming descent from Lusama. Byrisia rapidly becomes the dominant naval power of the **Middle Sea**.

Location of Byrisia.

–21 KR:
The Kingdom of Anshan reorganizes under **Rykus the Great**, forming the **Napthian Empire**, which soon conquers Nirari.

0 KR:
The people of Karth overthrow the last Tucaran king and establish the **Republic of Karth**.

20 KR:
The young republic suffers a devastating raid when Denaari wild elves sack and burn the city before retreating north. Karth rebuilds but harbors a lasting hatred of the Denaari.

34 KR:
Napthia conquers Pharos and restores the public worship of Set. Unknown to most, the empire is secretly ruled by **serpentmen**.

84 KR:
An alliance of Xelladran city-states repels a massive Napthian invasion.

100 KR:
Karth conquers the final Lathan tribes of the peninsula, ending the **Ally Wars**.

200 KR:
King **Fardos** of the city-state Pellgai begins a campaign to unite the Xelladran states.

220 KR:
Fardos succeeds, founding the **Thessadonian Empire**.

248 KR:
Fardos is assassinated by a Napthian agent before his son **Lassandros**. Lassandros vows revenge.

248–253 KR:
Rebellious city-states rise against Thessadonian rule, but Lassandros subdues them all.

254 KR:
Lassandros invades Napthia and utterly destroys it, earning the title **"Lassandros the Conqueror."**

263 KR:
Lassandros dies without an heir. His empire fractures into successor kingdoms: **Thessadonia, Massai, Pharos, and Arkethon**.

304 KR:
King Piros of Xelladra conquers colonies on the Karthan Peninsula. The Karthan Senate declares war.

311 KR:
Karth's legions defeat Piros and secure control of the peninsula.

345 KR:
The **Nethian Empire** rises from the ruins of Napthia.

411 KR:
Nethia conquers Arkethon.

423 KR:
Karth expands southward across the sea.

452–462 KR:
A territorial dispute between Karth and Byrisia escalates into a devastating naval war. Karth emerges victorious and burns Byrisia's capital.

465 KR:
Seeking revenge against Xelladran states that aided Byrisia, Karth invades the eastern peninsula.

470 KR:
Karth conquers the region but suffers heavy losses after Thessadonia deploys its war mages. Forced to avoid further destruction, Karth agrees to pay tribute to King Dryscus II. The insult is never forgotten.

491 KR:

The ancient Cymran island-city of Aetherion, which vanished more than three thousand years earlier during the Mage Wars, mysteriously returns to the world. At the moment of its reappearance, forgotten historical records and lost references to the city suddenly return to libraries and archives across the **Middle Sea**, as though they had always existed. Yet no living person possesses any memory of the city itself, its history, or the civilization that once thrived there.

Within months, explorers from the Isle of Keln and the Principality of Arlence begin expeditions to the island.

They discover an immense ruined metropolis—vastly larger than present-day Karth—its shattered towers and colossal avenues stretching for miles across the island. Yet the city is far from empty. The ruins are infested with monstrous and otherworldly horrors.

Scholars soon determine the terrible truth: the ritual that removed Aetherion from the world during the Mage Wars had not merely shifted it to another plane—it had hurled the city into the **Outer Dark**, a nightmarish dimension inhabited by entities known only as the **Horrors**. For millennia the abandoned city drifted in that terrible realm.

Despite the danger, rumors of lost Cymran magic, forgotten artifacts, and unimaginable treasure quickly spread across the **Middle Sea**. Treasure hunters, scholars, mercenaries, and adventurers flock to the island from every nation.

A fortified settlement soon rises along the island's southern harbor. Known as **Havenport**, it serves as the primary staging ground for expeditions into the haunted ruins. Governed jointly by several rival powers—including Keln, Arlence, and other interested states—the city quickly becomes a chaotic frontier port where merchants, spies, adventurers, and fortune-seekers from across the world gather.

From Havenport, countless expeditions venture into the vast ruins of Aetherion, hoping to uncover its secrets.

Few return unchanged.

498 KR:
The ancient red dragon **Vyrathra the Cinder Queen** descends upon the ruins of Aetherion. Accompanied by vast hordes of goblins, hobgoblins, and other chaotic creatures, the dragon claims large portions of the unexplored city as her domain. Many of the ruins were already filled with monstrous threats, but the arrival of Vyrathra's armies plunges the island into even greater danger and chaos.

Expeditions into the deeper districts of Aetherion become increasingly perilous as goblin warbands, dragon cultists, and other malevolent forces begin to organize under the dragon's banner.

The true purpose of Vyrathra's arrival remains unknown.

Her ultimate goal will be revealed in the forthcoming adventure path:

The Forgotten City.

506 KR:
Civil war erupts in Pharos between **Queen Khepatra** and her brother **Tehlmaiac IV**.

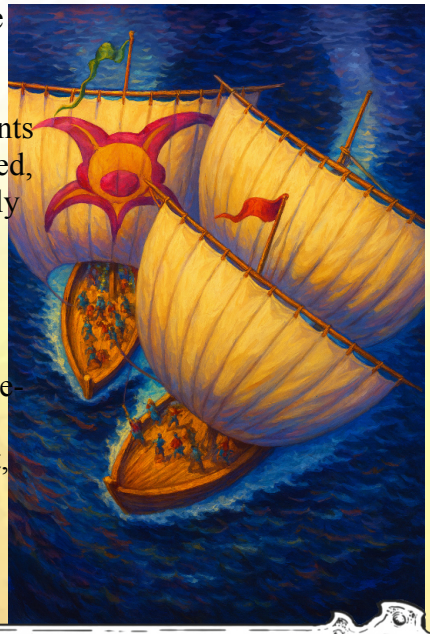
512 KR:
Present day.

THE REALMS

The realms of the **Middle Sea** are as diverse as they are dangerous, shaped by rich cultures, ancient histories, and ever-present conflict. Among the defining forces of the region, none is more pervasive or enduring than piracy.

PIRACY IN THE REALMS

A convergence of geography and necessity has made the **Middle Sea** a haven for pirates. Much of its coastline is barren and rocky, ill-suited for large-scale agriculture and incapable of sustaining dense populations. As a result, most coastal settlements are small, isolated, and economically fragile. Fishing serves as the primary means of survival, and nearly every able-bodied man possesses a boat, along with the seafaring and navigational



skills to use it. But when the sea yields too little, survival demands harsher measures.

Many turn to raiding, first along the coasts, then upon the open water. What begins as desperation often evolves into piracy.

The very features that make these coasts inhospitable to farming make them ideal for piracy. Jagged shorelines conceal hidden inlets and narrow coves, providing perfect staging grounds for ambushes along vital trade routes. From these concealed enclaves, pirate fleets can strike swiftly and vanish before their victims have any chance of escape.

These raiders owe allegiance to no crown. Rooted in a tradition of land-based plunder, they do not confine themselves to the sea. Coastal towns are frequent targets, and even inland settlements are not immune.

For this reason, many of the great cities of the **Middle Sea** are deliberately built between two and ten miles inland. Distance provides a measure of security, as pirates rarely venture far from their ships. Speed is their greatest advantage, and without it, they risk entrapment. Yet this safety comes at a cost.

The sea remains the lifeblood of commerce, and inland cities must rely on coastal counterparts to access it. Thus, twin-city systems have emerged throughout the region: inland capitals paired with fortified port cities. Karth and Atias. Akadolis and Piradolis. Each dependent on the other, yet divided by necessity.

Piracy is not merely an external threat—it is woven into the fabric of life itself. Men whose villages are raided often join pirate crews. Displaced sailors, left without work after attacks on merchant vessels, frequently turn to piracy themselves. It offers freedom, wealth, and the chance to transform one's fate in a matter of months.

Few places embody this better than the waters surrounding the island of Kros. Known as the "Golden Sea," the region's slave trade generates immense wealth—and attracts pirates in equal measure. Indeed, any thriving slave port in the **Middle Sea** is almost certainly tied to piracy.

Efforts to suppress piracy have been inconsistent at best. The great nations condemn pirates in times of peace, yet just as readily employ them as mercenaries in times of war. This uneasy contradiction ensures that piracy never truly disappears.

THE SEA KINGS

Across the countless islands of the **Middle Sea**, pirate strongholds rise and fall like tides. Among them, a select few captains wield such power that they crown themselves kings—warlords of the sea, commanding fleets and territories beyond the reach of any nation.

One of the most infamous among them is the following:

Dallen Yadwrick

A human pirate of unknown origin, Dallen Yadwrick is a figure shrouded in rumor and myth. Some claim he and his inner circle hail from another dimension—a world much like this one, yet fundamentally different, as Dallen himself has cryptically suggested.

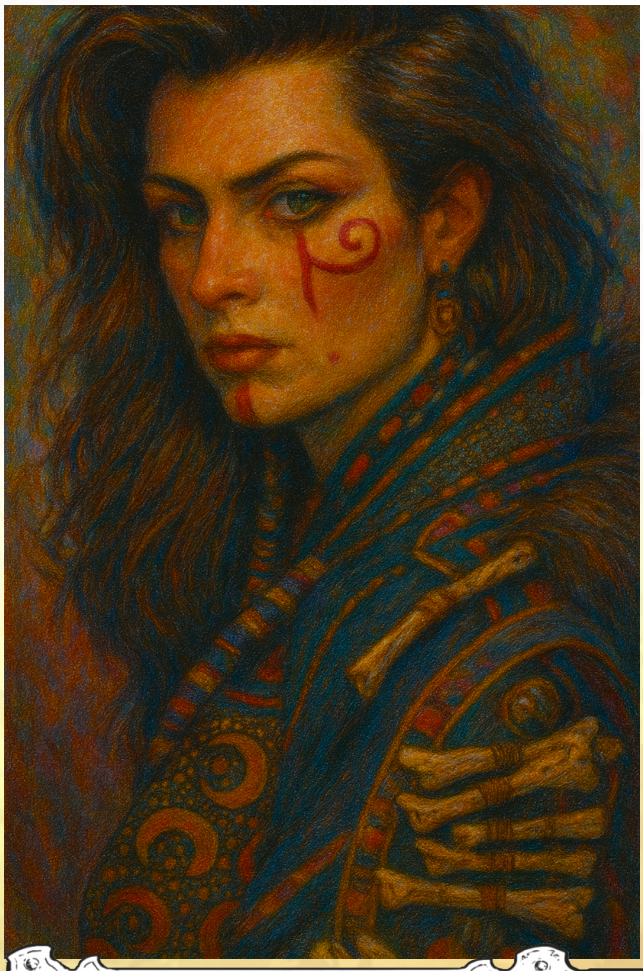
Others believe him to be a powerful sorcerer, pointing to tales that his right eye ignites into a writhing sphere of fire when he is angered. Still others whisper a darker truth: that he is no man at all, but a Demon Lord who has come to this world to relive a forgotten mortal existence. Whatever the truth may be, his power is undeniable. Dallen commands a fleet of more than thirty ships and a force exceeding three thousand pirates, making him one of the most formidable Sea Kings to ever rule the waters of the **Middle Sea**.

Shetezara Glendare

Shetezara Glendare was the only daughter of a Arlencian noble who was murdered by her scheming uncle. Forced to stow away aboard a ship in order to escape the murders, Shetezara was found at sea. Before the captain of the ship could decide what to do with her, the ship was attacked by pirates.

Shetezara was captured, but luckily for her, the captain was a young human rogue named Aelin, who fell in love with her. A romance bloomed, and Shetezara soon became a competent pirate and skilled swordswoman.

After Aeilin was murdered by another pirate captain—one in league with her treacherous uncle—she embarked on a journey of vengeance, staring a pirate war. It ended with her in control of a sizeable fleet (18 ships strong, including 2 galleons). Now she has her sights on the Principality of Arlence and her uncle. She has been engaging in a two-year campaign targeting his ships—and anyone's ships who does business with him—in an effort to draw him out to face her.



Shetezara Glendare
Level 6 Fighter

Armor Class 4 (leather + buckler + DEX mod) **Hit Points** 28 **Attacks** 1 × rapier (1d6+2) or dagger (1d4+2) **THAC0** 17
Movement Rate 60' (20')
Saves D10 W11 P12 B13 S14
Alignment Lawful
STR 11 **INT** 13 **WIS** 11
DEX 16 **CON** 7 **CHA** 11
Weapon proficiencies dagger, short sword, sword
Weapon specializations dagger, rapier
Items *pearl of wisdom*, *rapier +1 (+3 vs sahuagin)**, *dagger +1*, leather armor, buckler
Languages Common, Karthic, Kelnic

**Because she specializes in the rapier, Shetezara uses her DEX mod for attack*

The Republic of Karth

Capital: Karth
Demographics: 50% human, 15% elf, 12% half-elf, 8% dwarf, 5% dragonborn, 4% halfling, 3% gnome, 2% half-orc, 1% tiefling
Notable Settlements: See individual provinces
Government: Republic
Ruler: A Senate of 300 elected members, led by two consuls who preside over 1-year terms
Common Trade Goods: Olive oil, wine, grain, textiles, pottery, iron, silver, copper, marble, slaves, luxury goods
Beasts of Peril: See individual provinces

Overview

Situated at the heart of the Karthan Peninsula—itself the geographic and cultural center of the **Middle Sea**—the Republic of Karth stands as the dominant power of the known world.

Karth is widely regarded as the most advanced human civilization, though its influence extends far beyond humanity alone. Its institutions, laws, and customs have been adopted, imitated, or resisted by nearly every neighboring nation.

While not without corruption, inequality, or internal strife, Karth is often considered the closest thing the **Middle Sea** has to a "just" society. It affords broader rights, legal protections, and civic participation than any of its rivals—though such rights remain limited, stratified, and often dependent on wealth, class, or citizenship.

To some, Karth is a beacon of order and progress. To others, it is an expanding power cloaked in the language of virtue.

Government & Provinces

The Republic is divided into a number of territories known as *provinces*. Each province is governed by a provincial governor, appointed by the Senate to serve a 6-year term.

These governors wield significant authority—overseeing taxation, military command, and regional law—making provincial rule both a prestigious honor and a frequent source of political intrigue.

For ease of play, each province detailed in this section includes its own:

- ▶Demand and market values for trade goods
- ▶Regional dangers and notable beasts
- ▶Key settlements and points of interest

History

The calendar of the **Middle Sea** is reckoned from Karthan history, beginning with the formal founding of the Republic in **0 KR**.

However, the city of Karth itself predates the Republic by centuries. It was first founded in **–209 KR** by the paternal half-brothers **Merus** (a human) and **Lusama** (a half-elf), making the city over seven centuries old.

To understand their story, and the forces that shaped Karth, we must look further back still.

THE FALL OF JARESH

A little over one thousand years ago, around **–610 KR**, on the Xelladra Peninsula (south of modern Karth, in the region now occupied by Akadolis and Katharolis), the land was fractured into countless warring human tribes.

Amid this chaos stood a singular marvel: the city of **Jaresh** (juh-RESH).

Location of Jaresh.

Roughly 400 years before the rise of the great Xelladran city-states, Jaresh was already a beacon of wealth, knowledge, and architectural mastery—far surpassing its contemporaries in both power and sophistication. Its walls were said to be unbreachable. Its scholars unmatched. Its rulers, untouchable.

Inevitably, it drew envy.

Rival tribes, unable to challenge Jaresh alone, formed a rare and fragile alliance. Together, they laid siege to the city. The siege lasted ten years.

For a decade, Jaresh endured—its granaries full, its defenses unbroken, its people defiant. But in the end, it was not strength of arms that doomed it... but sorcery.

Through cunning and forbidden magic, the besieging forces found a way past the city's legendary defenses. The walls were breached—not by force, but by trickery—and Jaresh fell. What followed was an annihilation.

The city was sacked, its people slaughtered or scattered, and its knowledge lost to ash and ruin.

Yet from that destruction, echoes would remain—echoes that would, generations later, shape the founding of Karth itself.

THE LATHAN LEAGUE

Thousands survived the fall of Jaresh. Among them was King Jaxa himself, along with a great host of refugees—scholars, soldiers, artisans, and common folk alike. Fleeing the ruin of their city, they journeyed north and west, eventually settling in the rugged foothills of the great mountain range that bisects the Karthan Peninsula. There, hidden among valleys and defensible highlands, they began again.

Though they had once been citizens of Jaresh, these survivors no longer identified themselves by the name of their fallen city. Instead, they called themselves Lathans (LAY-thuns)—a word from their own tongue, denoting not merely a people, but a shared culture, tradition, and way of life.

Over time, the Lathans founded roughly thirty independent settlements along the mountain's edge. Each town governed itself, yet all were bound by shared heritage, mutual defense, and a loose confederation known as the Lathan League.

ALBA AND THE LEAGUE

Foremost among these settlements was Alba, founded and ruled by the exiled King Jaxa.

From this stronghold, Jaxa and his descendants became first among equals within the League.

They were less rulers than respected arbiters in times of dispute and war, whose authority lied in their wisdom.

Location of the Lathan League.

For nearly four centuries, the Lathan League dominated the central peninsula. Their mountain-border settlements proved difficult to invade, and their shared identity allowed them to repel external threats with surprising unity. Their caution helped keep them safe from a powerful enemy.

To the northwest lay the elven Kingdom of **Tucara** (too-CARR-uh), an ancient and enigmatic realm the Lathans chose neither to provoke nor to explore. Whether out of fear, respect, or unspoken agreement, the League largely turned inward, expanding little beyond their established lands.

FRACTURE AND DECLINE

Time, more than any enemy, proved to be the League's undoing. As generations passed, the memory of Jaresh faded from lived experience into distant legend. The shared trauma that once bound the Lathans together weakened, replaced by local loyalties and rival ambitions.

The towns began to see themselves not as one people, but as many. Trade disputes turned bitter. Border skirmishes became common. Alliances shifted, fractured, and reformed. Though the Lathan League endured in name, its unity had long since eroded. What had once been a confederation became a patchwork of competing city-states.

THE FALL OF ALBA

In –209 KR, the slow decay of the League culminated in a single, decisive act of violence.

In Alba, the heart of the old order, a coup overthrew the ruling king. The royal household was slaughtered: the king's wife, his daughters, and his eldest son all put to the sword. The line of Jaxa, it seemed, had finally come to an end. But not entirely: two sons escaped the massacre.

The first was Merus, a legitimate heir, raised in the traditions of Lathan nobility. The second was Lusama, his half-brother—a bastard of mixed blood, born of an elven mother and long regarded as an outsider within his own house. Hunted, dispossessed, and alone, the two fled Alba together.

What they would go on to found would not merely replace the Lathan League, it would surpass it.

THE OMEN

According to modern Karthan accounts, Merus was fourteen years of age, and Lusama only thirteen when they fled Alba.

Legends tell that as the brothers made their way north through the mountains, they came upon the nest of a great roc. The creature itself was nowhere to be seen, but within the vast tangle of branches lay five enormous eggs. As the boys watched, one of the eggs began to crack.

From it emerged a strange and terrible creature—a two-headed roc chick, each head crying out with its own will. Almost immediately, the two heads turned upon one another. They shrieked, struck, and tore at themselves in a frenzy of blind fury. The struggle was brief. One head slew the other. But the victory was hollow.

Deprived of its other half, the surviving head could not sustain life alone. Within moments, the creature collapsed and died beside its fallen twin. The brothers watched in silence, unsure of what it meant, but Merus took the event as an oment.

THE FOUNDING OF KARTH

When at last they emerged from the mountains and came upon a land marked by five hills, he declared it would be the site of their new city. In honor of the sign they had witnessed, and the unity it demanded, he named it Karth. There, the brothers began to build.

Merus proposed that they rule together, side by side—two leaders sharing power in balance. In time, Karthan historians would look back on this moment as the philosophical origin of the Republic's dual-consul system. But Lusama did not see balance. He saw inequality.

Long overshadowed by his elder brother—both by birthright and by blood—Lusama rejected the idea of shared rule. The strength of one, he argued, should determine the fate of all. The matter could not be settled with words.

THE DUEL

So the brothers fought. Steel against steel, will against will—the final echo of a conflict far older than themselves. In the end, Merus prevailed. He stood over his defeated brother, blade in hand, with every right—by strength, by custom, by the logic Lusama himself had invoked—to strike the killing blow.

But he remembered the roc.

He remembered how one head had destroyed the other and how, in doing so, it had doomed itself. And so Merus stayed his hand. Lusama was spared, but banished.

Wounded in body and pride, he fled into exile, vanishing from the lands of Karth.

LEGACY

Karthan tradition holds that this act of mercy defined the Republic's future: that power must be balanced, that division invites ruin, and that even victory can destroy those who claim it. Yet others tell the story differently. They say that in sparing Lusama, Merus did not prevent tragedy—he merely delayed it. For Lusama did not die in the wilderness. He endured. And in time, his descendants would rise to found the rival civilization of **Byrisia**, carrying with them a very different vision of power, inheritance, and rule.

EARLY YEARS

The early years of Karth saw a steady influx of settlers from across the peninsula.

Refugees from Alba—many fleeing persecution in the aftermath of the coup—arrived in large numbers. They were joined by migrants from scattered human tribes, as well as individuals of other races drawn by opportunity, stability, or simple survival.

From the beginning, Karth was not a city of one people, but of many. To maintain order among such diversity, Merus established the Council of Elders, a governing body in which each tribe and community could elect representatives to speak on their behalf. Though limited in power, the Council ensured that no single group could dominate the others outright. It was a fragile system, but it endured. Merus ruled for nearly six decades before his death in –150 KR, at the age of 73.

TUCARAN DOMINANCE

For generations, the elven Kingdom of Tucara had remained distant and enigmatic, holding its lands in the north without expansion or interference. Then, without warning, it changed.

In –142 KR, Tucaran forces (mostly human and half-elves, which made up their warrior classes) marched south into the Karthan Peninsula, advancing with speed and brutality. Within a short span of years, they had seized nearly half the peninsula, halting only when they reached the growing city of Karth itself. The Karthans resisted, but they were unprepared and overmatched.

The Tucarans wielded weapons of superior craft and magic drawn from an age far older than the Republic's founding. Against such a force, the young city could not stand.

Karth fell, and after it, the peninsula and remaining Lathan tribes.

Tucaran warriors.

The Tucarans were a remnant of the Fourth Age, a civilization already ancient by the time of Karth's rise. Yet they differed markedly from other high-elven cultures. Where most elves favored forested enclaves and living architecture, the Tucarans built cities of stone and marble, stark and enduring. They were said to be omnivorous—another deviation from the customs of their kin—and their society bore an austere, almost inhuman rigidity.

In addition, they were a people steeped in decadence and ritual excess. Unlike the austere image often associated with elvenkind, the Tucarans lived in opulence. Their cities of marble and polished stone were adorned with flowing silks, intricate carvings, perfumed gardens, and works of art meant not merely to inspire, but to overwhelm the senses. Beauty, to them, was not a virtue, it was an obligation.

This devotion to aesthetic perfection was not cultural alone, but religious. The Tucarans worshipped the elven goddess Lolth—a being of radiant and terrible beauty: flawless, eternal, and utterly insatiable.

She demanded devotion not through prayer, but through blood.

To honor her, the Tucarans practiced ritual sacrifice on a grand scale. Chief among these rites was the spectacle of forced combat—criminals, captives, and slaves compelled to fight to the death in carefully orchestrated arenas.

These were not seen as punishments, but as offerings. The spilling of blood, the struggle for dominance, the final moment of death—all were believed to carry divine significance.

The arenas themselves were places of both reverence and indulgence, where nobility gathered not only to witness sacrifice, but to celebrate it.

Feasts, music, and intoxicants accompanied the games, blending devotion with decadence until the line between worship and excess vanished entirely. To the Tucarans, this was beauty of the highest order. (In time, this practice would evolve into one of Karth's most infamous institutions:
gladiatorial combat.)

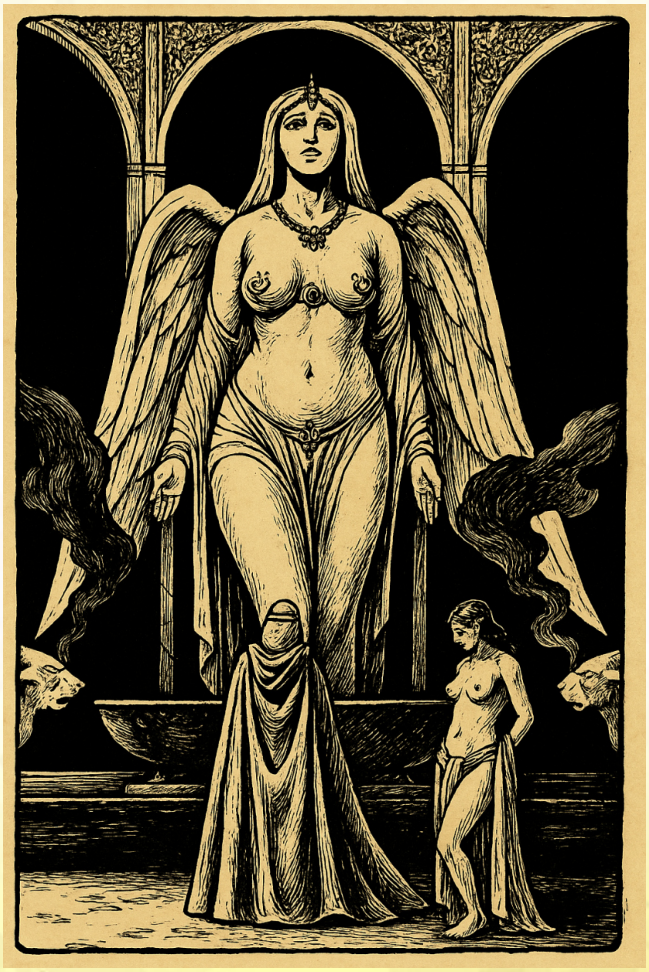
The Tucarans' faith and devotion to Lloth, many Karthan scholars argue, lies the clearest explanation for both their power... and their fall.

TUCURAN RULE

For over a century, the Tucarans ruled Karth and the surrounding lands. Their system of governance was both simple and absolute.

Each settlement was assigned a ruler known as an ***Aran***—a king in the Tucuran tongue—who wielded total and unquestioned authority within their domain. These Arans answered only to the distant Tucaran hierarchy, enforcing order with ruthless severity. Karth itself was given such a ruler.

Unlike other cities, however, Karth was permitted to retain its Council of Elders, though only as an advisory body. This concession may have been pragmatic—an easier way to govern a diverse population—or it may have reflected a recognition of Karth's growing importance.



Lloth the Beauty.

SERVONUS'S REBELLION

In 0 KR, a single act of cruelty ignited a revolution. The Tucaran Aran of Karth, King Tarquilion, abducted and violated the wife of a Karthan noble named Servonus. Servonus, enraged, began a rebellion that spread like dragon fire throughout the region. The Karthans rose up overnight, destroying the garrison and forcing Tarquilion to flee to the north.

Servonus rallied allies among the Karthan populace, and resentment, long simmering under Tucaran rule, erupted into open rebellion as one Lathan town after another rose up. But the Karthans did not stop at liberation. They pursued the Tucarans to their homeland.

As the rebellion spread and the war against the Tucarans began in earnest, the Karthans faced a grim truth: they could not win. For it was not only elven steel and ancient magic that upheld Tucaran rule, but the favor of their goddess. So long as she watched over them, their power seemed unbreakable.

In the darkest days of the uprising, Servonus withdrew from the war and sought counsel not from men, but from the divine. In a sacred place, its location now lost to history, he made an offering to the gods of the world and spoke a desperate oath.

He swore that if they would cast down Lloth, if they would strip her from the Tucarans and leave them vulnerable, then Karth would become a nation devoted to them above all others. Their names would be raised in temples of stone and marble. Their rites would be observed across the peninsula. Their will would guide the laws of their land. Karth would belong to them for all time. At first, there was only silence. Then, the gods answered. Not just one, but nine.

These nine deities, who would in time become the Karthan Pantheon, heard Servonus' plea and accepted his vow. Where once they had stood apart, they now acted in unity, bound by a single purpose. Together, these gods descended upon Lloth.

What followed is told in a hundred different ways—some say it was a war in the heavens, others that it unfolded across unseen planes beyond mortal comprehension. But all accounts agree on the outcome: Lloth was defeated. Struck down by the combined will of the nine, she was cast out of the world and hurled into the depths of the Abyss. There, stripped of

her former glory and divinity, her radiant beauty was twisted into something monstrous. Her form became a nightmare reflection of what she once was—a vast, grotesque spider body, crowned with the still-beautiful face of an elven woman, now frozen in hunger, rage, and eternal spite.

Thus was Lloth unmade. And thus was she reborn.

AFTERMATH

With their goddess gone, the Tucurans were changed, cursed just as she. Their skin changed to pitch black, and they could no longer stand the sun that they loved so much. They became the **drow**. Some fled to the south, to the present-day lands of the Narseh, while others fled into the Land of the Thanes, where they eventually migrated to the Underdark, where today they rule within the bowels of the earth, scheming for the return of glory of their beloved Lloth.

Lloth the Terrible.

BIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC

In early 9 KR, with victory secured, Servonus stood at the height of his power. He could have declared himself king. He did not.

Instead, he established a new system of governance: the Republic of Karth. Drawing on earlier traditions, he restored the principle that citizens should have a voice in their leadership. The old Council of Elders was reorganized into the Karthan Senate, with representation allotted among the various tribes and peoples of the city. From this foundation, the modern Republic was born. A state not of kings—but of laws, compromise, and ambition.

In the aftermath of the war, as the Republic took shape, a formal social order was established to define the rights and roles of its citizens.

Those who owned land, or who had distinguished themselves in the wars against the Tucurans, were granted elevated status as members of the noble class, known as the *Aristarii* (ah-ris-TAHR-ee-eye). These individuals formed the political and economic backbone of the Republic, their influence extending across both the Senate and the provinces.

All other free citizens were classified as the *Latharii* (luh-THAR-ee)—the common people of Karth. Though afforded certain rights and protections under the new system, their political power was limited, and their fortunes often tied to those of the Aristarii they served, supported, or opposed.

This division, though practical in its design, would become a defining tension within Karthan society—one that would shape its conflicts, and its identity, for generations to come.

And with this structure in place, the Republic of Karth was, at last, fully born.

THE DENAARI AND ALLY WARS

In 20 KR, the young Republic suffered its first true humiliation. From the northern wilds came the Denaari—a vast host of wild elves who had long been held in check by the now-fallen Tucaran kingdom. With that ancient power gone, nothing remained to restrain them. They descended upon the peninsula in great numbers. The Karthans marched to meet them in open battle, confident in their recent victories and newfound unity. But they were unprepared for the Denaari's ferocity.

Fighting with a savage intensity and an instinctive command of primal magic, the wild elves shattered the Karthan lines and sent their army into retreat.

With little left to oppose them, the Denaari advanced on Karth itself.

The city was sacked.

For days, chaos reigned—fires burned unchecked, temples were desecrated, and thousands were slain or carried off. The young Republic, so recently forged in triumph, stood on the brink of collapse.

And then, as suddenly as they had come, the Denaari withdrew. They vanished back into the northern wilderness, beyond the LongWall mountains, leaving behind a broken city and a people forever changed.

REFORM AND RESOLVE

Karth endured.

In the years that followed, the Republic rebuilt its capital and undertook its first major act of permanent defense: the construction of a great wall encircling the city, completed by 30 KR.

But stone alone was not enough.

The Senate initiated sweeping military reforms, rethinking tactics, discipline, and—most critically—the role of magic in warfare. The defeat at the hands of the Denaari had made one truth undeniable: Karth could no longer rely on tradition alone to survive.

Though centuries have passed, the memory of the sack has never faded. To this day, the Karthans regard the Denaari with deep suspicion and bitterness, viewing them not as a people, but as a lingering threat from beyond the edge of civilization.

Karthan military after the reforms of 32 KR

EXPANSION

In the wake of disaster came ambition. The Senate concluded that Karth's safety could not be secured through defense alone. If the Republic were to endure, it would need to dominate the peninsula—to control its borders, its peoples, and its resources.

The solution was clear: The lands of the old Lathan League would be united once more—but not as a confederation. This time, there would be a single power.

And that power would be Karth.

THE ALLY WARS

In 32 KR, Karth turned its gaze southward and westward, toward the lands of its own ancestors. The first target was Alba, the ancient heart of the Lathan League.

Marching with a reformed army and hardened resolve, Karthan forces defeated Alba's defenders in the field. Facing certain defeat, the city surrendered, sparing itself destruction. It was the first of many such campaigns.

What followed became known as the Ally Wars—a series of conflicts fought over nearly seven decades, as Karth subdued, allied with, or absorbed the remaining Lathan tribes and city-states.

Some resisted and were crushed. Others capitulated and were incorporated into the Republic with varying degrees of autonomy. By 100 KR, the process was complete. The entire peninsula surrounding the great central mountains now stood under Karthan control.

THE ORACLE VESSELS

In 203 KR, the Karthan Senate received a request from a traveler visiting the city. The traveler was a female gnome, ancient, who hailed from the mysterious and ancient lands far, far to the south, beyond even the lands of Ka-Li. She presented the senate with 8 clay vessels in the shape of eggs, and demanded a sum of 100 platinum pieces each. The serving consuls at the time asked what they were, but she refused to answer, so they sent her away. She returned the next day with only 7 vessels, this time asking for 200 pp each. They once again refused, and she again left.

This went on until the fourth day, when she returned with only 5 vessels, demanding 400 pp each. The senate, finally overcome with curiosity, paid. She then explained that each vessel contains the ability to grant a prophecy in times of crisis by smashing it open. She left the 5 vessels with them, claiming Karth would need all and more in the centuries to come. She then departed, never to be seen again.

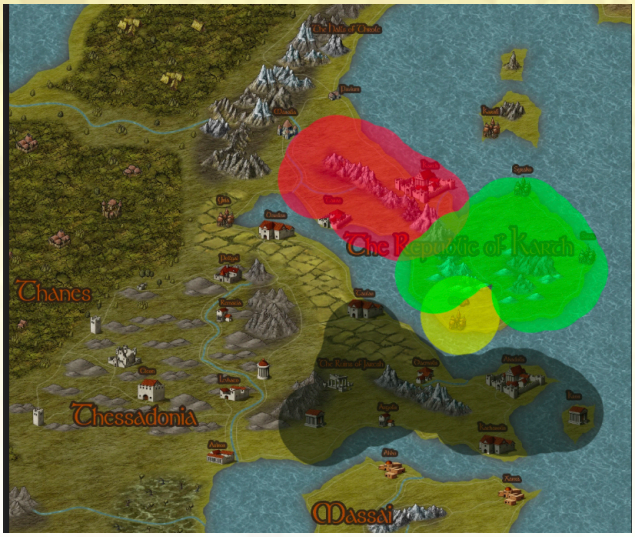
THE FIRST XELLADRAN WARS

The city states of Xelladra began settling colonies on the southern portion of the peninsula as far back as –143 KR. By the time Karth unified the peninsula, several independent city states dotted the region. For centuries, the two cultures lived as neighbors. The Xelladrans ruled over the most arable land of the peninsula, and was the primary source of grain for Karth and its Lathan allies. As trade partners, the two settled into a mutually beneficial relationship, until 300 KR, when King Piros of Elimya began a campaign to subjugate the rest of the Xelladran colonies under his rule.

For the first four years, the Karthan Senate ignored the wars that Piros was waging, considering it an internal matter amongst the Xelladrans. But by 304 KR, when it became apparent that Piros and his hoplite armies were in danger of succeeding in their ambitions, Karth decided that having a powerful, unified kingdom right on their border was too dangerous a proposition, and so declared war.the rest of the Xelladran colonies under his rule.

They mustered five legions (25,000 men) and marched against Piros in the spring of 304 KR. Piros surprised them by fielding a large contingent of war elephants, manticores, and hill giants. The Karthan legions were routed, and King Piros demanded that Karth cease hostilities, and officially declare him King of the South, legitimizing his right to rule.

Karth answered by sending 10 more legions.



Domains at the beginning of Piros's campaign: red = Karth; black = Xelladra; green = various independent Xelladran colonies; yellow = Piros's kingdom

The war with Piros lasted 7 long, brutal years, but in the end, Karth was victorious after breaking open the first of five Oracle Vessels. The prophecy within instructed the Karthans to seek a temporary alliance with the merfolk of the **Middle Sea**.

Consul Varatakis (vuh-RAH-tuh-kiss) held a treatise with the merfolk, paying them the legendary **Pearl of Ocules** (AH-cue-leez) for their help. The merfolk agreed, laying siege to Piros's ports, allowing the Karthan legions to gain the upper hand.

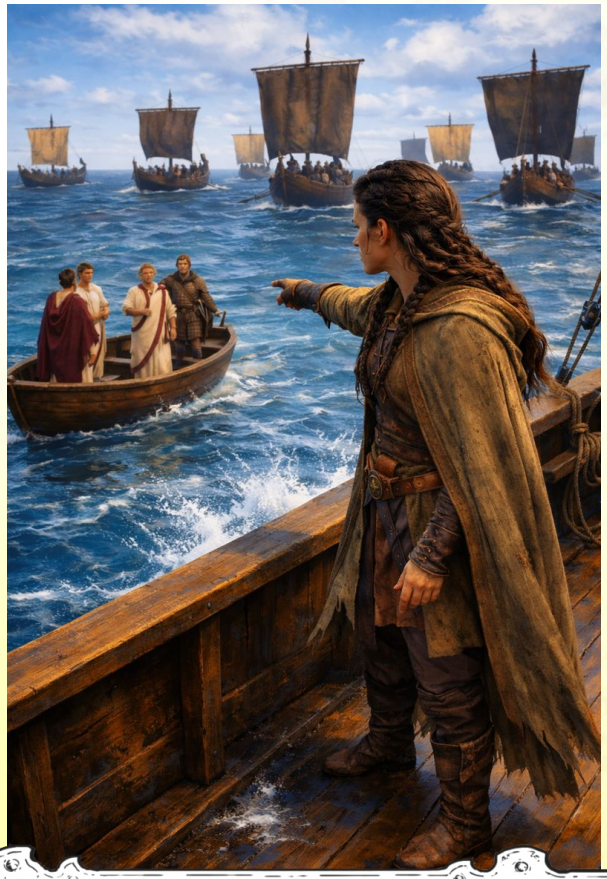
After the victory, rather than granting the Xelladran city-states their freedoms back, Karth absorbed them into the Republic, forming

the Kartha Minor province.

LYRIAN EXPANSION

Lyria is the name of the fertile land across the sea to the south of the Karthan Peninsula, north of Xelladra, and has been for millennia home to the Lyrians, independent tribes of humans. In 420 KR, the leader of one of the tribes, Queen Ardia of the Teuta (TAY-oo-tah) had declared herself ruler of a large confederation of Lyrian tribes. Queen Ardia's husband, King Agron, had died. In fact, he had been poisoned at the queen's command, for she had been having an affair with a local elven pirate Sea King by the name of Etuis (EH-doo-wiss). With the strength of Etuis's pirate fleet, Queen Ardia was able to bring her neighbors under her banner, and set out to control the sea lanes and profitable coastal trade routes.

This did not go unnoticed by the Karthan Senate or its Lathan allies, whose ships were being attacked. Karth sent an envoy to Queen Ardia, asking an immediate cessation of hostilities. Queen Ardia was already invading Xelladran cities on the Xelladran Peninsula, and Karth rightly feared she would do the same to coastal cities on their lands.



Queen Ardia assured Karth that the attacks on their merchant vessels was a simple mistake, and she had no ambitions to encroach on their side of the sea. The Karthan Senate debated about what to do about the young queen, whose words were honey but who continued her aggressive expansion in the south.

They advised that it would only be a matter of time before she was powerful enough to challenge Karth itself. The warmongers eventually swayed the votes, and Karth declared war in 423 KR. Their legions marched around the sea, invading from the north, while their newly created fleet attached the pirate fleet of Etuis.

Within a year, the whole of Lyira was conquered, and the senate declared it part of the Republic, as Lyria Province.

WAR WITH BYRISIA

Byrisia was a powerful city in the east, on the shores of the **Middle Sea**. It was founded in –102 KR by the granddaughter of Lusama the half-elf, one of the cofounders of Karth. By the time the Karthans had expulsed the last of the Tucaran kings, Byrisia was already a powerful naval force and was expanding its influence across the region. By 452 KR, Byrisia controlled present-day Byrisia Province, Ecabatana, Lusatania, the island of Karali, and the eastern coast of Mauretania.

After the war with Lyria, Karth enjoyed a strong command of the seas around its territories, but a dispute with Byrisia over the sea lanes around Karali led to open conflict.

Karth won the naval war, cutting Byrisia off from Karali, allowing the Karthans to absorb the island into a new province (Karali Province).

But knowing the Byrisians would not sit idly by, the Karthan Senate voted to continue the war, pushing into Byrisia's territories. The war lasted 10 years, and ended with the total destruction of the city of Byrisia itself.

However, the war wasn't without its costs. For the second time, the Karthans used one of their Oracle Vessels, which instructed them to build a temple to Avras, their God of War, in the center of Karth, and sacrifice to it a white bull. The Karthans did so, and soon after won a critical battle, turning the tides of the war. This battle encouraged the people of

Ecabatana and Lusatania—both kingdoms having suffered under the rule of Byrisia for over 100 years—to rebel, and the Byrisian Empire quickly crumbled.

Karth (red) territories and Byrisia (blue) territories at the start of the conflict

Soon after they laid siege to Byrisia, which lasted two years. They finally stormed the walls, slaughtering its inhabitants, and selling the survivors as slaves.

After the war, Karth became the most dominant naval power in the **Middle Sea**, and without a doubt, the most major super power of the known world. Karth gained two additional provinces—Byrisia, and the holdings Byrisia controlled in eastern Mauretania.

Elements of the senate wished to absorb Ecabatana and Lusatania as provinces as well, but more logical heads prevailed, as the legions were already spread thin, and they didn't have the administration and manpower to force them into the republic. So instead, Karth formally announced their freedom in a grand affair, presenting themselves as their liberators.

THE SECOND XELLADRAN WAR

The war with Byrisia ended in 462 KR, and almost immediately after, a Karthan senator named Kadar the Elder began unleashing fiery speeches on the senate floor to invade Xelladra as a punitive measure, for during the long war with Byrisia, many of the city-states had aided their enemy. After three years of passionate rhetoric, Kadar finally got his wish, and the Karthans sent a punitive force to the Xelladran Peninsula.It was the beginning of a five-year war.

A consul by the name of Karamus was put in charge of the legions. What was unusual about Karamus was that he was a half-orc, and was part of the *Latharii* citizen class. He had distinguished himself as a common soldier in the wars against Byrisia, and had received special allowance from the senate to run. His popularity in the wars led to a landslide in votes, beginning his one-year term in 465 KR, along with a human co-consul (a man named Braxus).

Karamus's first motion was to grant Kadar the Elder's request for war, which the senate voted in favor for, placing him in charge of 6 legions. Karamus was voted in as consul two more times in the next two years as well, in absentia, as he continued the war, finally agreeing to not run for a fourth term during the fourth year of war.

The wars went on for a total of five years, at the end of which Xelladra was added as the latest Karthan province.

However, as soon as the war ended, the King of Thessadonia, King Dryscus, fearing further Karthan expansion, sent a unit of his legendary War Mages to attack, wiping out an entire legion.

This move by Dryscus took Karamus completely off guard, and he was forced to negotiate terms. Dryscus demanded a hefty tribute for peace, claiming the fiveyear war had severely harmed Thessadonia's treasury by disrupting trade in the region (a claim that was likely true).

Despite this embarrassment, Karamus was able to spin this is a political victory, claiming he had skillfully negotiated a way out of a costly war.

The senate granted him a military Triumph upon his return to the city.

KARAMUS AND LUSSA

Karamus was an ambitious half-orc. He was a man of the people, believing in hard work and personal honor. But he was also a bitter man, having faced many prejudices in his youth, both for being a *Latharii*, but more so for having orc blood in his veins. As such, he had to work twice as hard and be twice as honorable as his fellow Karthans. This led to Karamus being a harsh judge of character—of his own as well as others.

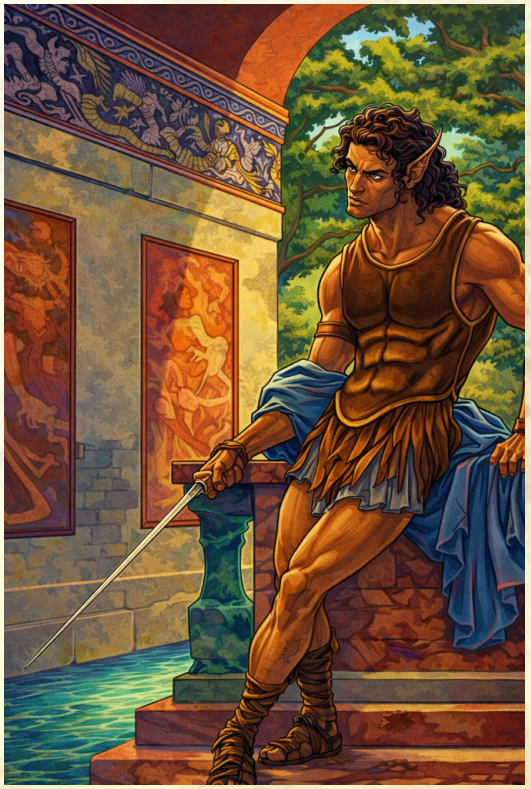
By the end of the war with Xelladra, he had accomplished what no other *Latharii* in Karthan history had ever done—he had served as a consul not once, but an astounding three times; he was a decorated war hero who had been awarded a military Triumph; and he added a new province to the Republic. If he were any other man, he would have been content with that—but Karamus wanted more.

Karamus

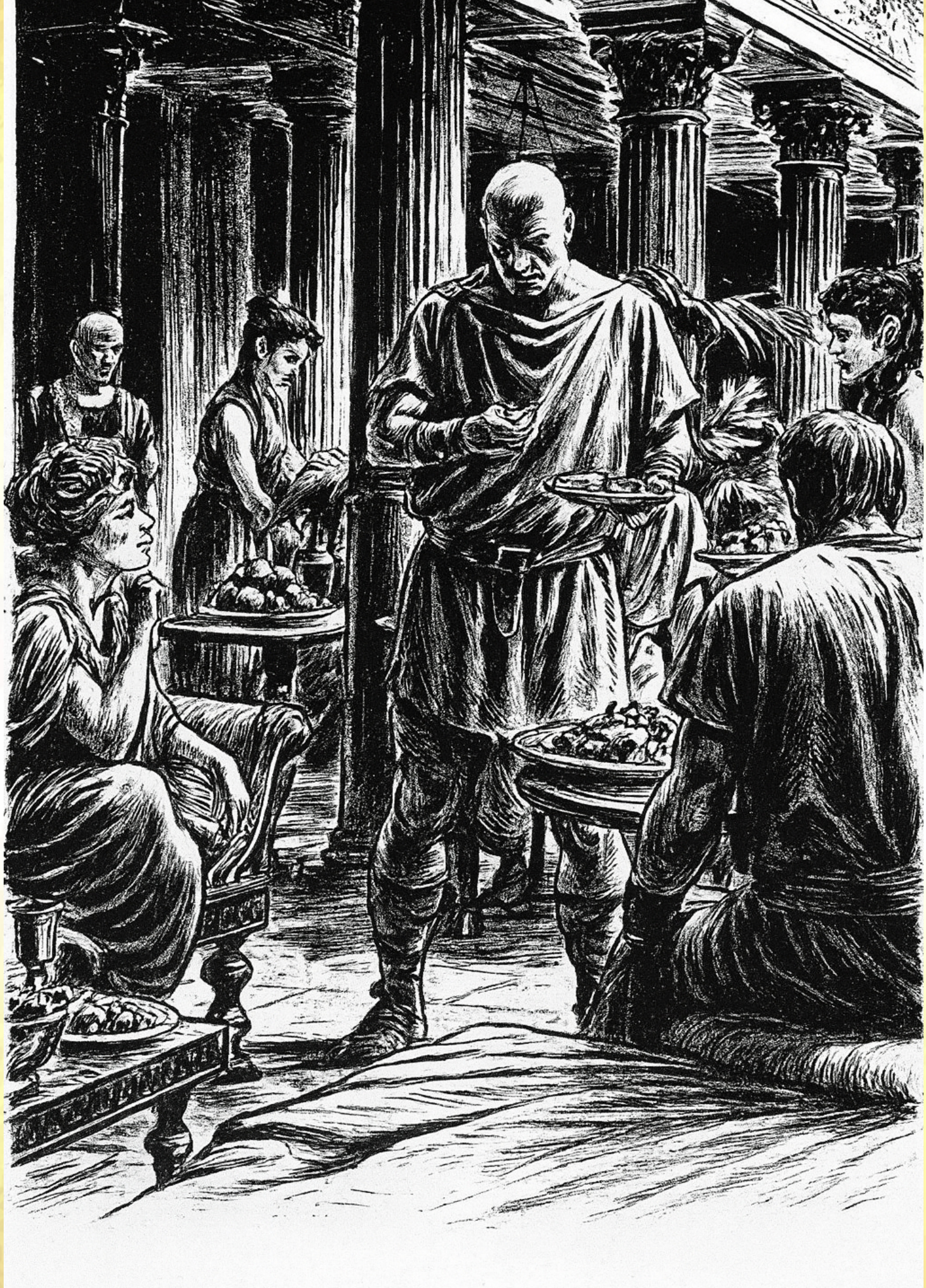
During the campaign in Xelladra, Karamus had visited the famed Oracle at Phidia, and while there, the oracle had told him that he would serve as consul a total of five times—one for each hill of the city. He was determined to make this happen. When he announced his bid to run for consul again in 473 KR, many *Aristarri*, who had supported him before as a useful tool to push through a war with Xelladra, now felt threatened by his ambitions. But he was still very popular amongst the commoners, and so they needed to find a hero to rival him—someone from their social class.

This hero of the nobility came in the form of Lussa, an elven lieutenant of *Aristarri* blood who had served with distinction under Karamus during the war. What they couldn't know at the time was that they were propping up a cruel tyrant.

Lussa was born of noble blood. However, by the time he was 10 years old, his family was bankrupt, having borrowed heavily from the banks for unwise land speculation investment. Having lost their means, Lussa's family sold him to a traveling circus troupe, full of bards, actors, and other entertainers. Lussa was primarily used as a sex boy for the troupe's leader, a heavyset human by the name of Dagdar. As a result, Lussa grew up with himself a taste for young boys—particularly humans—and a fondness for hedonism.



Lussa



But despite this upbringing, Lussa never forgot his heritage, or what he believed was his birthright. When he was old enough, he returned to Karth, and there met an older human noblewoman, a widow, who owned a large estate and vast sum of wealth, about 10 miles from the city. Despite her advanced age, Lussa was able to seduce her, and get her to agree to marry him. Once they had married and she had signed over everything in her will, Lussa strangled her to death and made it look like an accidental drowning.

With his new wealth, Lussa bought his way into the army, just as the legions were marching for Byrisia. He purchased himself a position as a centurion, despite having no background in military training. But he proved to have an affinity for soldiering and leadership, and a penchant for cold cruelty on the battlefield. Lussa eagerly accepted the backing of the senate to run for consul against his former general—in fact, it was he who subtly manipulated the idea in the first place.

But it was at an impasse—both men ended up running together, becoming co-consuls in the year 472 KR.

THE THANIC HORDE

The consulship of Karamus and Lussa was off to a rocky start, with each seeking to undermine the authority of the other, vetoing each other's proposals at every turn. Then, two months into the year, word reached them from Denaari tribes friendly to Karth (friendly in the sense that they allowed traders into their lands) that a vast migration of Thanes had invaded their lands, with the intention of making to the Karthan Peninsula. Apparently two large tribes—the Black Spears and the Blood Feathers—having outgrown the available lands in Thane, decided to migrate, and they had been told by their god Gruumsh to settle in the lands of the Karthans. When asked how large this host was, the Denaari told them 120,000 warriors, mostly orcs, though there were also large contingents of hobgoblins, goblins, ogres, trolls, and kobolds.

The senate was in a panic. They voted that the legions be sent out at once to face them. Lussa and his *Aristarri* benefactors were eager to have supreme command fall to him, as such a victory would legitimize him as a hero of the people. Sensing this, Karamus went straight to

the people and told them the news in the public forum, terrifying them with the prospect of the Thanic invasion, and then reminding them of his victories against both Byrisia and Xelladra.

At the fevered roar of the crowd, the senate had no choice but to appoint Karamus as supreme leader of the legions. Karamus, instead of putting Lussa, his fellow consul, in charge of legions and co-command with him, ordered Lussa to remain on the peninsula with 1 legion, just in case any of the Thanes made it through. This of course was an insult, and a tactic to keep Lussa away from the glory. And it worked.

Karamus marched into the lands of the Denaari with legions (30,000 men), where he was joined by several auxiliary units from Denaari tribes, swelling his numbers up to 45,000. This was the first time Karth and the Denaari fought side by side.

Karamus chose a hill overlooking a long, broad plain to set up his army. He hid 10,000 troops—one of his best legions, along with 5,000 Denaari—in the dense forest.

When the Thanes arrives, they drew up on the field below, but refused to assault his superior position. Karamus sent down his skirmishers and Denaari cavalry, along with Denaari druids, to pick away at the large host and draw them out. It worked.

After the Thanes charged and were locked in battle, Karamus sent out the signal, and the 10,000 troops hiding came out and flanked them from the rear. This caused confusion in the Thanic horde, and they began to rout. Estimates say that over 90,000 Thanes were killed, while Karamus lost only 2,500 soldiers (the Denaari lost closer to 3,000).

Before returning to Karth, Karamus annexed the lands around the LongWall mountains, citing the need for a buffer between Karth and the Land of the Denaari, creating LongWall Province.

After Karamus returned to the city, the senate threw him his second military Triumph. For the rest of their one-year term, Karamus ruled as consul, with Lussa swept aside.

Karamus pushed through a new military reform bill, reorganizing the army from the top down, and issuing new equipment and armor. He also granted veterans free land, promising each retired legionnaire 30 acres somewhere in the Republic, and increased their pay. He also created a new symbol for the legionnaires' shields, with 5 feathers on each corner reaching out in all directions, to represent the limitless reach of the Republic, and the 5 hills of Karth.

The legionaries before the Karamus Reforms.

Karamus's reforms were hugely popular amongst the armies, as well as the common people. At the end of their term, Karamus again was seen as a champion of Karth and of the *Latharii*, while Lussa had hardly made a name for himself at all. This cemented the bitterness he felt for his old commander, and it would not end here.

THE WAR WITH KELN

After their consulships, Karamus and Lussa went their separate ways, but neither really vanished from public life, each still members of the senate, and each a champion of his respective social class.

Standard legionary kit after the Karamus Reforms.

In late 474 KR, word reached Karth about a conflict growing in the Kingdom of Lusatania. Keln merchants from the Kingdom of Gilda had over the past several years taken up more and more property in the coastal city of Elsha. Their power and influence was growing so much that local merchants were being ousted from their own trades. When the local Suffet attempted to crack down on their growing power, the Keln merchants unleashed their private mercenary "guards", quickly routing the local garrison and taking control of the town.

Three Gildan galleons filled with troops and knights from Keln arrive a fortnight later to reinforce control, and they renamed the town New Gilda. King Mipsa recently sent a small army to retake the town and repulse the foreigners, but they were defeated by the heavy knights of the Gildans.

Now Mipsa has called upon Karth to help. The senate debated, and they decided that they could not allow Gilda such a strong

foothold in the **Middle Sea.** The time to elect two new consuls was approaching, and so again Karamus announced his bid to run. He was determined to sit as consul a fifth time, just as the oracle had foretold, and he coveted the opportunity to lead the legions against Keln.

But this time, the *Aristarri* were prepared, and through a successful campaign of bribes, festivals, and gladiator games in Lussa's name, they were able to secure the consulship in 475 KR for him and his running mate, a dwarf *Aristarri* named Arimli. The senate wasted no time, granting Lussa command of the legions. They set out for the port at Atias, but as soon as they had left, Karamus began a public smear campaign of Lussa, giving fiery speeches to the crowds, speaking of how unjust his assumption of the consular seat was, and the rumors about his special love for young boys.

The *Latharri* mobs started a riot, and Karamus's allies in the senate demanded a recall of Lussa and for command to be given to Karamus. The senate, facing large, angry mobs of *Latharii* on the streets, had no choice but to agree. But when the envoys reached Lussa, he had them stoned to death. He then told his legions this was a criminal act, and only one thing could be done.

He marched on Karth.

This had never been done in the history of the republic. Legions were forbidden from entering the city—and indeed, having swords inside the city walls was a serious crime. But the legions followed Lussa's orders and took the city easily. Under Lussa's orders, they posted a list of names on the senate doors, offering a reward for the death or capture of any on the list. The legions and mob of people then set about butchering Karamus's supporters, both commoner and *Aristarri*, even members of the senate. The streets ran red with blood.

Karamus himself barely escaped the city alive, fleeing to Xelladra province. Lussa, satisfied that the city was under control, put a large bounty on Karamus's head and considered the matter settled. He then gave a speech to a terrified senate (what was left of it), rebuking them for rescinding his command. He asked, quite politely, if it had simply been a mistake—they all agreed that it had. Lussa then marched back to Atias, and he and his legions set sail for Lusatania.

The following month, Lussa faced the Gildan army outside the walls of New Gilda, Though Lussa was indeed a capable general, his army was surprised by the power of charging Keln knights, and the battle was not going in his favor. That's when Lussa surprised everyone by casting a spell that animated the dead legionnaires, setting them upon the enemy army—Lussa was a sorcerer, and one who was well-versed in necromancy.

The Karthan legions were horrified by this, but they were more terrified of Lussa, and so pressed the fight. A flanking maneuver by Karthan cavalry turned the tide, and Lussa was victorious.

Lussa had all of the Gildan prisoners crucified, along with any Gildan merchant. He had all of their property and goods confiscated and handed out to his legions, and handed the city back over to King Mipsa. King Mipsa, rather than changing the name of New Gilda back to Elsha, simply called it Gilda, to mock the city of Gilda—and their entire kingdom—back in Keln. It's a name that remains to this day.

CIVIL WAR

Karamus was not idle while Lussa was on campaign. Once he arrived in Xelladra, Karamus put the word out to all of his veterans who had been given land in the province, and within a month he had 3 legions. With his own personal funds he rose 2 additional legions, and he borrowed money from the banks to raise a sixth. Within a few months after his exile, Karamus sailed across from Xelladra and marched on Karth. The token force that Lussa had left behind to guard the city were easily swept aside. Karamus then rounded up Lussa's most staunch supporters in the senate and had them executed, planting their severed heads on spears and leaving them on display around the forum.

Lussa was still in Lusatania, dictating terms of trade with King Mipsa and wrapping up his campaign against Gilda when word reached him about Karamus's return.

He set sail for Karth immediately.

By the time he had arrive, Karamus had been elected consul by the senate—his fifth and final term, just as the oracle predicted. But when he looked out at the approaching legions, he was horrified to see that Lussa had brought all of his men back...

...even the dead ones.

The dead legionnaires stormed the walls, while those under Lussa's command still living stormed the gates. It was a ferocious fight that lasted three days, but in the end Karamus was killed, and the city was taken by Lussa once again.

Lussa declared a crisis, and had the senate elect him Dictator. He imposed harsh martial law on the city, instructing the urban cohorts to expand their duties to night watchmen (more on them later). Lussa ruled the city for a year, and it was a time of tyranny. He held large orgies on the senate floor; had any political enemy, imagined or otherwise, crucified; and drained Karth's treasuries on lavish feasts and festivals held in his honor.

In the end, a Karthan paladin named Zolcaf and his stalwart adventuring group put an end to Lussa's evil, slaying him and restoring the senate to power. But Lussa's body vanished soon after, and rumor has it that his most loyal followers smuggled the corpse out of the city, in hopes that they could one day fulfill his wish—the wish to become a lich.

Over the next 10 years, Karth eventually regained a sense of its old self, but the terrors of Karamus and Lussa have left their scars, and the civil war set a terrible precedent. What will happen from here, only time will tell.

THE PROVINCES

The current year is 512 KR, and the Karthan Republic is split up into 9 provinces. Provinces are ruled by provincial governors, assigned by the senate, and serve for a term of 6 years. Governors are responsible for paying and upkeeping for provincial legions, infrastructure, and public happiness. Governors get to keep 50% of what's left over for their personal use.

The walls of Karth.

THE CITY OF KARTH

Notable Settlement: Karth (120,000 families; Market Value I)
Total Population: 200,000 families (approximately 1,000,000 people)
Demand Values: Alum +2, Dyes +2, Exotic Hides +2, Grains +3, Hides +1, Iron +1, Ivory +2 Lead +1, Lumber +1, Marble +1, Olive Oil −2, Papyrus −1, Pottery −1, Silk +4, Silver +1, Slaves +1, Spice +2, Textiles −1, Tin +2, Wine −1
Beasts of Peril: aarakocra, ankheg, axe beak, dog, eagle, ghosts, giant eagle, giant octopus, giant owl, hill giant, hippogriff, lycanthropes (shapeshifters), merfolk, roc, stirge, umber hulk, vampire, wolf, wraith
Annual Treasury: 743,000 pp (including approximately 400,000 pp in savings)
Annual Expenses: 700,000 pp
Legions: 3 (Legio I, Legio II, Legio III)

Though not a province, Karth and the immediate surroundings are under direct control of the senate. The legions are not allowed within the city, and so are spread out in forts (1 legion per fort) around the surrounding countryside, where they can be summoned at a moment's notice.

Karth spends a vast sum on subsidizing bread for the city's poor (half a million platinum coins). This has the effect of driving up the price of grain in the region.

The city of Karth sits a few miles inland along the river Rebia. The port town of Atia sits at the mouth of the river.

Atia.

THE RIVER MARKET OF KARTH

Goods from all across the **Middle Sea** arrive there and get transported by barge upriver to the docks of Karth. Likewise, goods float downriver to Atia before loading on ships to markets elsewhere.

From dawn until well past dusk, the river is choked with traffic. Flat-bottomed barges heavy with grain drift in from upriver provinces, while sleek coastal vessels arrive bearing amphorae of wine, oil, and rare goods from distant shores. Dockhands shout in a dozen tongues as cargo is hauled, tallied, taxed, and—just as often—quietly diverted.

The market itself sprawls along both banks, a dense maze of wooden stalls, stone storehouses, and canvas awnings bleached by sun and salt. Here, merchants of every race and station compete for space and coin. Dwarven factors oversee shipments of iron and worked stone with meticulous precision, while gnome traders deal in curiosities—clockwork trinkets, alchemical reagents, and stranger things besides. Halfling families run food stalls that draw long lines, their recipes prized by laborers and senators alike.

Closer to the waterline, trade takes on a more unusual character. At certain hours, marked by the tide, delegations from the sea arrive. Tritons and merfolk surface alongside specially marked docks, exchanging pearls, coral, and deep-sea rarities for worked metal, textiles, and surface-crafted tools. These dealings are tightly regulated, yet never entirely free of tension; misunderstandings between land and sea are not uncommon, and more than one merchant has vanished after a dispute carried beneath the waves.

Above it all loom the tax collectors of the Republic, ever-present and rarely welcome. Every crate, every coin, every contract passes—officially or otherwise—through their scrutiny. Where taxes flow, so too does corruption, and the River Market is said to be as much a battlefield of bribes and backroom deals as it is a center of honest trade.

For adventurers, the River Market offers opportunity in abundance: rare goods, whispered rumors, discreet employers, and illicit cargoes moving under the cover of legitimate commerce. But it is also a place where fortunes are lost as quickly as they are made... and where the river carries away more than just trade.

KARTHA MAJOR

Notable Settlements: Taras (70,000 families; Market Value II)

Total Population: 420,000 families (2.1 million people)

Demand Values: alum +2, dyes +2, exotic hides +2, grains +1, hides +1, iron +1, ivory +2, lead +1, lumber +1, marble +1, olive oil -2, papyrus -1, pottery -1, silk +4, silver +1, slaves +1, spice +2, textiles -1, tin +2, wine -1

Beasts of Peril: aarakocra, ankheg, axe beak, bulette, demons, dog, dopplegangers, eagle, ghosts, giant eagle, giant octopus, giant owl, hill giant, hippogriff, horses, lycanthropes (shapechangers), merfolk, roc, stirge, umber hulk, vampires, wolf, wraith

Annual Treasury: 361,000 pp (roughly 200,000 pp in the treasury savings)

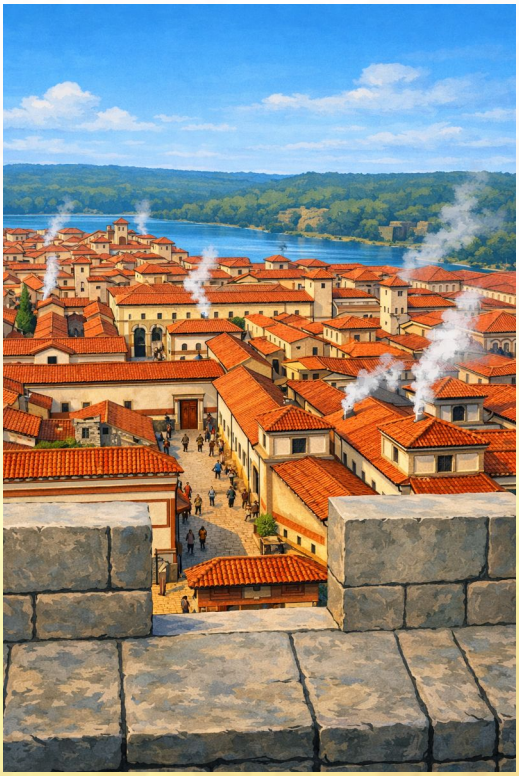
Annual Expenses: 253,000 pp (includes 69,000 pp tax to Karth); 54,000 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 3 (Legio IV, Legio V, and Legio VI)

Kartha Major province.

Because this province is surrounded on all sides by other Karthan provinces, being assigned here as governor is seen as an insult for men with ambition. This assignment is seen as more of purely administrative, though older men who just wish to fill their personal coffers covet this region.

The legions of the Karthan peninsula are made up heavily of the Lathan allies, and so most of them wear the traditional uniforms of their respective tribes.



Taras.

The Albanii

The Tarsii

The Senarrii, Aquinarrii, and Corvanii

The Drusannii, Trevarrii, and Brutanii

KARTHA MINOR

Notable Settlements: Elimya (70,000 families; Market Value II), Sana (80,000 families; Market Value II), Syrako (100,000 families; Market Value I)

Total Population: families (3.5 million people)

Demand Values: dyes +2, exotic hides +2, hides +1, iron +1, ivory +1, lead +1, lumber +1, marble +1, olive oil -2, papyrus -1, pottery -1, silk +4, silver +1, slaves +1, spice +2, textiles -1, tin +2, wine -1

Beasts of Peril: aarakocra, ankheg, axe beak, bulette, dog, eagle, ghosts, giant eagle, giant octopus, giant owl, hill giant, hippogriff, horses, lyncanthropes (shapechangers), merfolk, roc, stirge, umber hulk, vampires, wolf, wraith

Annual Treasury: 550,000 pp (roughly 360,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 355,000 pp (includes 100,000 pp tax to Karth); 97,500 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 4 (Legio VII, Legio VIII, Legio IX, Legio X)

Kartha Minor province.

The region of Kartha Minor lies at the southern end of the Karthan Peninsula. Its inhabitants are mainly from Lathan and Xelladran lineage. It is a primary source of alum and grain for the Republic. Its people are mostly farmers, and the farming estates are owned by rich and powerful agriculture magnates whose political power back in Karth is formidable. Having the support of these farmers is a key to winning any election. Governors of this region have to contend with pirates, and their primary responsibility is to keep not only the alum and grain flowing from the fields and mines in the province, but also ensuring that the grain shipments from Pharos continue unimpeded.

LYRIA

Notable Settlements: Taulas (60,000 families; Market Value II) and Dardan (40,000 families; Market Value III)

Total Population: 450,000 families (2.25 million people)

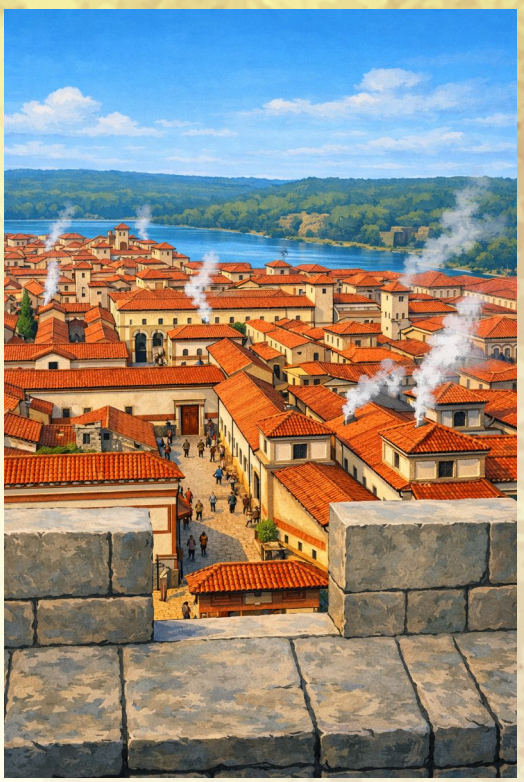
Demand Values: cheese/dairy -1, exotic hides +2, fish -2, hemp -1, hides -2, iron +1, ivory +2, lumber -1, marble -1, olive oil -1, pottery +1, textiles -1, wool -1

Beasts of Peril: ankheg, axe beak, bulette, dog, eagle, ghosts, giant eagle, giant octopus, giant owl, goblinkind, hill giant, hippogriff, lyncanthropes (shapechangers), merfolk, roc, stirge, stone giant, umber hulk, vampires, wolf, wraith

Annual Treasury: 391,000 pp (roughly 180,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 260,000 pp (includes 74,000 pp tax to Karth); 65,500 pp into governor's pockets

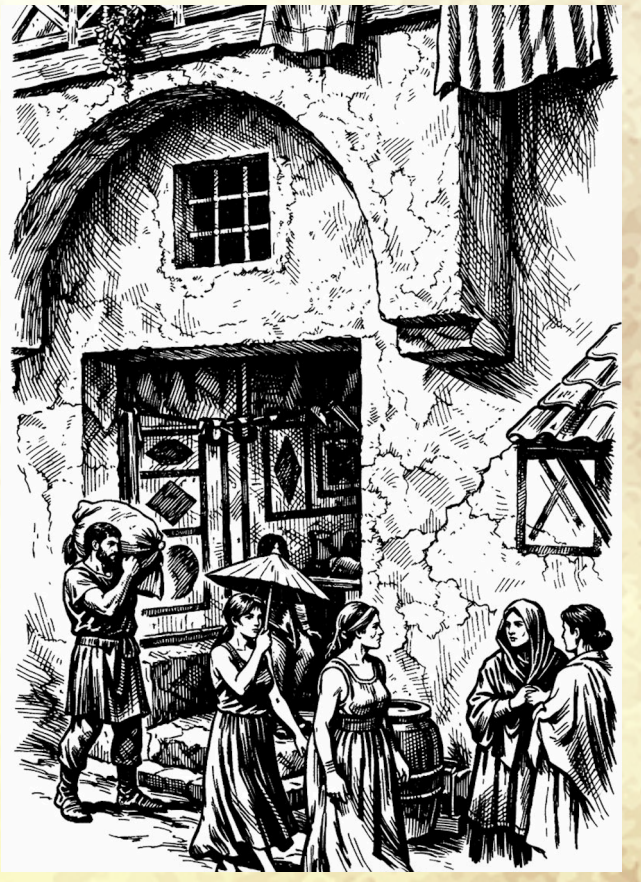
Legions: 3 (Legio XI, Legio XII, Legio IX, Legio XIII)



Taulas

Lyria province.

The region of the Lyrians is well known for its bountiful resources. As it borders Thessadonia and the Land of the Thanes, it's highly coveted by those seeking a governing position, as it may lead to war, and all of the glory and plunder that might bring.



KARALI

Notable Settlements: Karali (50,000 families; Market Value III)

Total Population: 150,000 families (750,000 people)

Demand Values: cheese/dairy -1, exotic hides +2, fish -1, hides +1, iron +1, lumber +2, marble +1, olive oil -1, pottery +1, slaves +2, textiles +1, wine -1, wool -1

Beasts of Peril: ankheg, axe beak, eagle, ghosts, giant eagle, giant octopus, merfolk, stirge, vampires, wraith

Annual Treasury: 124,000 pp (roughly 180,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 85,000 pp (includes 24,000 pp tax to Karth); 19,500 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 1 (Legio XIV)

Karali province.

The island of Karali is a land primarily of agriculture. Though some coastal towns and villages have modest fishing fleets, the primary exports include grains, olive oil, garum, and wine.

Karali is always at peril from pirates. An unspoken agreement exists between the provincial governors and the Sea Kings—Karali and its ships of trade are off limits to attack, and in exchange, Karali is a friendly port for their slave markets.

GARUM PRODUCTION

The pungent aroma of garum production defines the local economy as much as the salt air itself. This prized fermented fish sauce is crafted in sun-drenched stone vats where layers of salt and small, oily fish are left to liquefy under the intense summer heat for several months. The resulting amber fluid is a culinary essential, used by both commoners and high-ranking officials to add a savory, salty depth to everything from roasted meats to watered-down wine. Beyond its flavor, garum is a vital strategic resource; its high salt content and long shelf life make it an indispensable ration for the Legions on long marches where fresh meat is scarce. While the finest pressings are exported in wax-sealed amphorae to the elite of Karth, the thick dregs remaining in the vats—known as allec—provide a cheap, protein-rich staple for the laborers and sailors who keep the province's markets thriving.

BYRISIA

Notable Settlements: Cirta (60,000 families; Market Value II), Garama (50,000 families; Market Value III)

Total Population: 420,000 families (2.1 million people)

Demand Values: alum +2, amber -2, dyes -1, exotic hides -1, fish -1, glasswares -1, hides +1, iron +3, ivory -2, lead +1, lumber +4, luxury goods -1, marble +1, olive oil -2, slaves -1, spices -1, wine -2, wool -1

Beasts of Peril: androsphinx, bulette, camels, chuul, displacer beast, dog, dragon turtle, dust mephit, earth elemental, elephant, flying snake, ghost, giant centipede, giant crab, giant hyena, guardian naga, gynosphinx, hunter shark, jackalwere, lamia, lion, manticore, giant poisonous snake, giant scorpion, rhinoceros, scorpionmen, vampire, wraith

Annual Treasury: 368,000 pp (roughly 180,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 252,000 pp (includes 69,000 pp tax to Karth); 58,000 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 3 (Legio XV, Legio XVI, Legio XVII)

Byrisia province.

Byrisia was recently the capital of the most powerful nation in the **Middle Sea**—until it was brought low by the Karthan legions. Now the shattered bones of the capital lie along a windswept shore, and the region around it is a Karthan province.

In addition to his regular provincial duties, the governor of Byrisia is tasked with keeping an eye on Pharos and Ecabatana—two nations that increasingly make the senate nervous.

MAURETANIA

Notable Settlements: Vettona (20,000 families; Market Value IV), Tarra (40,000 families; Market Value III)

Total Population: 220,000 families (1.1 million people)

Demand Values: copper -1, grain +1, iron -2, lead -1, lumber +1, mules -1, salt -2, silver -1, tin -2

Beasts of Peril: ankheg, bulette, dog, giant wolf, goblinkind, hill giant, mules, stone giant, xorn, werewolves, wolf, worg, wyvern

Annual Treasury: 160,000 pp (roughly 16,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 152,000 pp (includes 29,000 pp tax to Karth); 4,000 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 2 (Legio XVIII, Legio XIX)

Inherited as part of the spoils of war against Byrisia, Mauretania is not a province assigned to governors looking to get rich—it is for those looking to gain a name for fighting.

Mauretania province.

The hill dwarves of Mauretania never got used to Byrisian rule, and they have not accepted the replacement of their authority with Karth's lightly.

Rebellion has brewed ever since, and while Karth has some tenuous alliances with some of the various tribes on the peninsula, the ones under their direct control (i.e., the Vettona and the Tarra) chafe under their rule, and take every opportunity to remind the legions of that fact.

XELLADRA

Notable Settlements: Daemolis (60,000 families; Market Value II), Akadolis (60,000 families; Market Value II), Katharolis (60,000 families; Market Value II), Kros (60,000 families; Market Value II)

Total Population: 540,000 families (2.7 million people)

Demand Values: exotic hides +1, fish -1, glasswares +2, grain +1, hides -1, marble -1, olive oil -1, papyrus +1, pork +1, pottery -2, slaves +2, spices +2, textiles +1, tin +1

Beasts of Peril: aarakocra, axe beak, basilisk, bulette, carrion crawler, centaur, chimera, cloud giant, cyclops, dire wolf, death dog, demons, devils, dog, eagle, empyrean, ghost, giant owl, giant rat, giant scorpion, giant sea horse, giant shark, giant vulture, goat, gorgon, grick, grick alpha, griffon, harpy, hawk, hell hound, hook horror, horses, hydra, medusa, merfolk, minotaur, mule, nightmare, owl, pegasus, poisonous snake, roc, sahuagin, satyr, shadow, shadow demon, shapechangers (lycanthropes, dopplegangers), spartalos, storm giant, thanatonic titan, vampire, wolf, wraith

Annual Treasury: 450,000 pp (roughly 80,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 405,000 pp (includes 90,000 pp tax to Karth); 22,500 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 5 (Legio XX, Legio XXI, Legio XXII, Legio XXIII, Legio XXIV)

Xelladra province is the highest-legion-count province of the republic, and stands ready to face a large number of threats, including Thessadonia, pirates, Narseh, and Massai. The slave markets of Kros is one of the largest in the **Middle Sea**.

Xelladra province.

LONGWALL

Notable Settlements: Yria (50,000 families; Market Value III), Masalia (50,000 families; Market Value III), Pavium (150,000 families; Market Value I)

Total Population: 460,000 families (2.3 million people)

Demand Values: exotic hides +2, glasswares +2, grain +2, hides -1, iron -1, marble -1, olive oil -1, papyrus +1, pottery -1, slaves +3, spices +2, textiles +2, tin +1

Beasts of Peril: aarakocra, ankheg, axe beak, bulette, demons, dog, dopplegangers, eagle, ghosts, giant eagle, giant octopus, giant owl, goblinkind, hill giant, hippogriff, horses, lyncanthropes (shapechangers), roc, stirge, stone giant, umber hulk, vampires, wolf, wraith

Annual Treasury: 425,000 pp (roughly 140,000 pp in the treasury savings)

Annual Expenses: 330,000 pp (includes 85,000 pp tax to Karth); 47,500 pp into governor's pockets

Legions: 4 (Legio XXV, Legio XXVI, Legio XXVII, Legio XXVIII)

Surrounding the base of the mighty Longwall Mountains and the Halls of Throle, Longwall province is meant to be a barrier between the Karthan peninsula and the wild Denaari and the ferocious Thanes beyond.

The Karthans control a castle in the pass which is permanently garrisoned with 100 rotating troops. They impose a 10% tax on any goods traveling through.

KARTHAN CULTURE

Karthan culture is shaped by conquest, survival, and the constant tension between tradition and ambition. It stands apart from all other civilizations of the **Middle Sea**, not only in its institutions, but in the character of its people.

To be Karthan is, above all, to be certain. Certain that your city stands at the center of the world. Certain that its laws, customs, and gods are superior to all others. Certain that its dominance was not merely earned, but destined.

This confidence is not without cause. Within a few short centuries, Karth has endured invasion, thrown off foreign rule, and brought the entire peninsula under its authority. Its citizens grow up surrounded by monuments to these achievements—triumphal arches, statues of generals, and the ever-present Senate halls where the fate of nations is debated.

Yet beneath this pride lies complexity. Karth is a city of many peoples—humans, elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, and more—each contributing to its identity while quietly preserving their own traditions. This diversity is both a strength and a fault line, creating a society that is vibrant, but never entirely unified.

Magic, too, occupies an uneasy place in Karthan life. While divine rites are accepted—particularly those honoring the Nine—arcane sorcery is viewed with suspicion. The memory of the Tucarans, and the role their magic played in both their dominance and their fall, lingers in the cultural consciousness. Hedge-wizards, charm-sellers, and wandering spellcasters are tolerated, but rarely trusted. True practitioners of powerful magic often keep their abilities hidden—or find themselves under quiet scrutiny.

THE PATRON-CLIENT SYSTEM

In the early Republic, relationships between the ***Aristarii*** (the noble class) and the ***Latharii*** (common citizens) were largely economic. Wealthy landowners provided small plots for farming, offering protection and stability in exchange for labor and loyalty. Over time, this arrangement evolved into one of the defining institutions of Karthan society: the patron–client system.

Under this system, a patron—typically a wealthy *Aristarii*—offers their clients protection, financial assistance, legal advocacy, and social advancement. In return, clients provide service in whatever form is required: running errands, managing affairs, guarding property, supporting their patron in political matters, or simply swelling their numbers in public displays of influence.

A powerful patron may have dozens—sometimes hundreds—of clients. These relationships are not always coercive. Many clients take pride in their loyalty, and a just or generous patron can earn fierce devotion. But the system is not without abuse. Indebted clients may find themselves bound to a patron's will in all but name, their freedom constrained by obligation rather than law.

THE COLLEGIA

As Karth grew into the greatest trade hub of the **Middle Sea**, competition among craftsmen intensified. Rivalries between tradesmen—dwarven smiths, human merchants, gnome artificers—often spilled into sabotage, street violence, and even open conflict. In response, a halfling senator named Numa proposed a solution: the creation of organized trade guilds

known as the **collegia.**

Each collegium governs a specific trade, and membership is required for anyone wishing to legally practice that profession within the city. Members contribute to a shared fund, which supports the guild's operations—maintaining meeting halls, providing aid to members, and hosting feasts and festivals that reinforce unity and identity.

At their best, the collegia bring order, stability, and mutual support. At their worst, they are something else entirely. Over time, the guilds have grown into powerful political entities. They fund candidates, influence legislation, and exert control over prices, labor, and supply. Rival collegia sometimes clash not just in markets, but in the streets.

Among the most prominent collegia are those of the goldsmiths, bankers, carpenters, dyers, cobblers, potters, and shipwrights—though dozens more exist, ranging from musicians and performers to butchers, skinners, and fishmongers along the river districts.

CITY LIFE

Karth is a culture of extremes, where wealth and poverty stand side by side, separated by little more than a street.

The wealthy dwell in spacious townhouses of marble and painted plaster, their homes built around open courtyards where fountains trickle and servants move quietly about their duties. Beyond the city walls, many maintain even grander estates—vineyards, orchards, and villas worked by tenants and slaves. Within the city, however, such luxury is rare.

Karthan villa.

Most Karthans live in tall, crowded tenements known as insulae. These structures rise five or six stories high, built of brick, timber, and whatever materials could be cheaply acquired.

The lower floors are more stable and more expensive, often occupied by small shops or slightly better-off families. The upper levels, reached by narrow staircases and creaking ladders, are cramped, dangerous, and prone to fire. Entire families live within a single room, cooking, sleeping, and working in the same space. Water must be carried, waste must be hauled away, and privacy is nearly nonexistent. At night, the buildings hum with life. Arguments, laughter, crying children, and the constant murmur of the city pressing in from all sides. Yet even here, life persists with stubborn energy.

At street level, Karth is a city of commerce. Market stalls line the major roads and public squares, their canvas awnings casting shifting shade over piles of goods—fresh bread, olives, fish packed in salt, bolts of cloth, cheap tools, and small curiosities brought from distant lands. Hawkers shout their prices, customers argue loudly, and coin changes hands in a constant, restless flow. Nothing is truly fixed; prices rise and fall with supply, rumor, and the mood of the crowd.

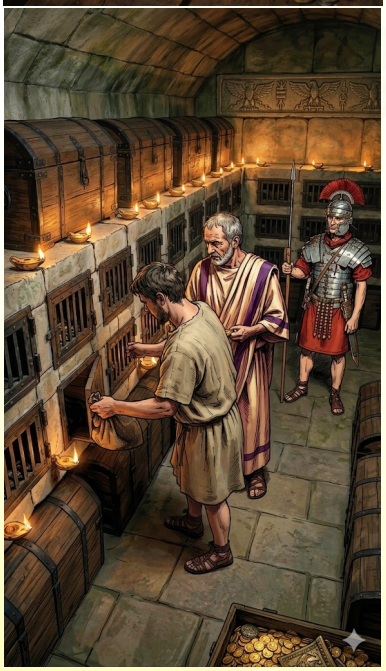
CORNER SHOPS

More permanent trade takes place in the *tabernae*, the small corner shops built into the ground floors of tenements. These are run by craftsmen, families, or members of the collegia, and offer more reliability than the markets, if not always better prices. A cobbler may spend his entire life in a single doorway, repairing sandals for generations of the same families, while next door a dyer stains cloth in vats that color the street with runoff.

For more specialized goods—armor, weapons, or finely crafted tools—one must deal with the guilds. The collegia control nearly every trade in Karth. A smith does not simply sell a sword; he sells it as a member of his guild, under its protection and its rules. Prices are consistent, quality is enforced, and disputes are handled internally, often with little regard for outside authority. Dwarven smiths are especially prized, their work commanding high prices and long wait times. Those seeking custom arms or armor will need not only coin, but patience (and often an introduction).

BANKING

Coin itself flows through Karth in staggering amounts, and much of it passes through the hands of the city's bankers. These institutions, backed by powerful families and guilds, offer storage, loans, and letters of credit that allow merchants to move wealth without carrying it. Their buildings are solid, heavily guarded, and treated with a respect bordering on reverence. To default on a debt in Karth is not merely a personal failure—it is a public disgrace, and one that can end in imprisonment or bondage.



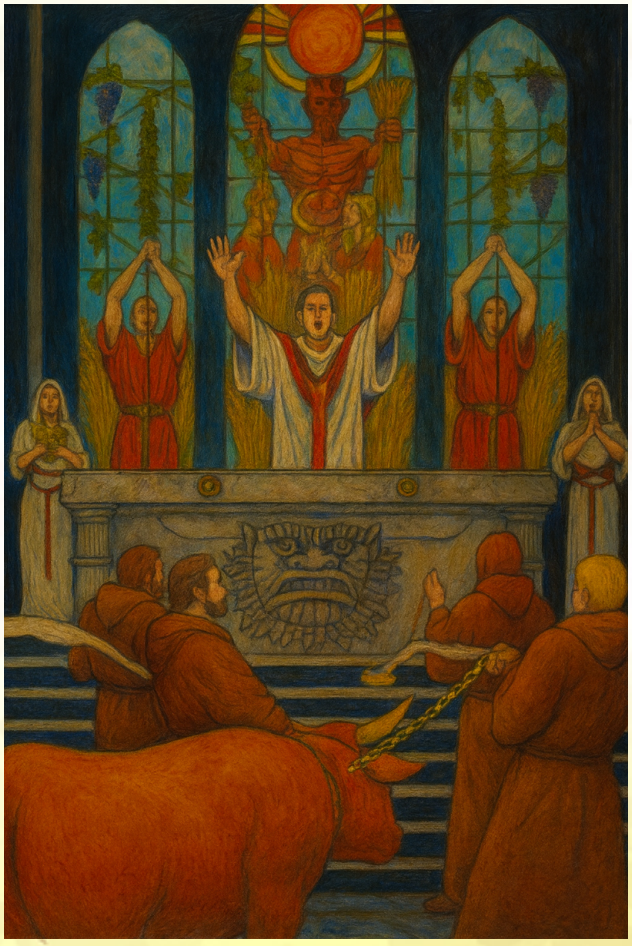
INNS & TAVERNS

For travelers, the city offers no shortage of places to eat and rest, though quality varies as widely as anything else. Taverns are everywhere—loud, crowded, and thick with smoke and conversation. Laborers, sailors, soldiers, and drifters gather around rough tables to drink watered wine or cheap ale, eating whatever the kitchen has prepared that day. Meals are simple but filling: stews thick with grain, loaves of bread, olives, and occasionally meat. Service is quick and practical. A server brings what is ordered, coin is expected without delay, and lingering without paying is a good way to be thrown out.

Inns provide lodging for those who can afford it. Most offer a stable or arrangement nearby, where mounts are taken by stablehands for a small fee and returned when called for. Inside, accommodations range from a place on the common room floor near the hearth to shared sleeping quarters or, for those willing to pay, a private room with a locking door and a measure of security. The innkeeper rules their establishment firmly, settling disputes, keeping order, and ensuring trouble doesn't disrupt business.

TEMPLES

Above all of this rise the temples. Dedicated to the Nine, these sacred spaces range from humble shrines tucked between buildings to vast complexes of stone and marble, their columns and steps worn smooth by generations of worshipers. Most are open to the public, and any may enter (citizen or foreigner, rich or poor) provided they show proper respect. Weapons are expected to remain sheathed, voices kept low, and offerings given according to one's means. Within, priests and acolytes tend to the needs of the faithful. They offer blessings, interpret omens, record births and deaths, and, in some cases, perform minor miracles granted by their gods. Larger temples maintain their own staff of scribes, attendants, and guards, functioning as both religious and civic centers.



PUBLIC BATHS

Public baths are among the most important social institutions in Karth, serving not only as places of cleanliness, but as centers of daily life. Found in nearly every district—from modest neighborhood bathhouses to vast, marble complexes funded by wealthy patrons—the baths are open to citizens of all classes, though the quality of the experience varies accordingly. For a small fee, one gains access to heated rooms, cold pools, and spaces for washing, rest, and conversation. The cost for entry can be anywhere from 1 bronze piece to 8, depending on the quality and privacy of the location.

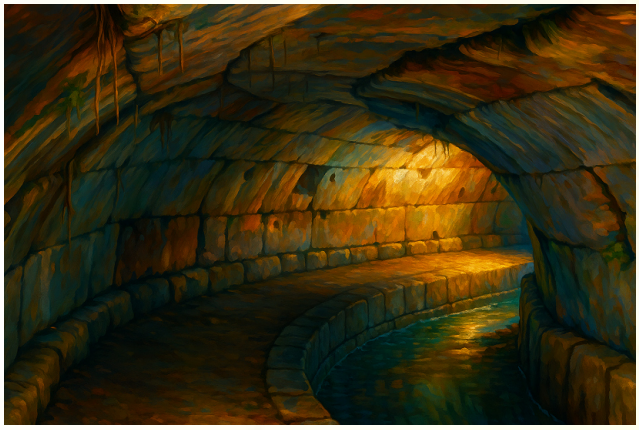
A typical bathhouse moves in sequence: warm rooms to open the pores, hot baths to cleanse the body, and cold plunges to close the skin and restore vigor. Attendants (often slaves or hired laborers) provide oils, scrape the skin clean with curved tools, and maintain the fires that heat the water beneath the floors.

Baths are where business is discussed, deals are struck, and rumors spread. Senators, merchants, soldiers, and laborers alike pass through their halls, if not at the same time, then under the same roof. Philosophers debate, patrons meet clients, and travelers can hear half the city's secrets in a single afternoon. Custom dictates a certain level of decorum. Weapons are left at the entrance, voices are kept measured, and disputes are discouraged—though not unheard of.

SEWERS

Beneath the streets of Karth lies another city. Unseen by most, and avoided by nearly all, a vast network of tunnels, channels, and stone-lined passages carries waste and stormwater away from the capital and out toward the river and sea. What began as simple drainage ditches in the early days of the Republic has, over centuries of expansion, become an immense and often poorly understood system. It is said that no two maps of the sewers fully agree.

At the heart of the system are the great drains: broad, vaulted channels of ancient stone, some large enough for a wagon to pass through. These main arteries run beneath the oldest parts of the city, sloping steadily downward to carry runoff away from streets, bathhouses, workshops, and tenements. During heavy rains, they roar with rushing water. In dry seasons, they slow to a sluggish flow, revealing walkways, ledges, and maintenance paths used by workers and, at times, those who prefer not to be seen above ground.



Many of the oldest sections are believed to date back to the early Republic—or even earlier, built atop foundations laid during the time of Tucaran rule. The stonework in these areas is often smoother, tighter, and stranger in its construction, as though shaped by methods no longer practiced.

The upkeep of the sewers falls to a combination of state laborers, slaves, and contracted workers, many of whom are drawn from the lower classes or assigned as punishment for minor crimes. They descend into the tunnels with lamps, tools, and little protection, clearing blockages, repairing stonework, and ensuring that the flow continues. It is dangerous work. Flooding can occur without warning.

Not all of the tunnels are known. As Karth expanded, older sections were abandoned, sealed, or simply forgotten. Some passages lead nowhere, ending in collapsed stone or buried chambers. Others connect to structures that no longer exist above ground. There are persistent rumors of deeper levels still. Such places attract smugglers, fugitives, and those who wish to move unseen. They also attract things less easily explained.

Where water, darkness, and neglect gather, life follows. Rats are everywhere, of course—some in numbers large enough to strip a body clean. But they are not the only inhabitants. Stray animals, insects, and stranger creatures have been reported in the depths, particularly in older or less-maintained sections.

The sewers provide hidden routes beneath guarded streets, access to restricted areas, and places where the laws of the Republic hold little sway.

Whether used by thieves, cults, or those simply trying to survive outside the system, the tunnels below are as much a part of Karth as the marble halls above.

But once below, it is not always easy to find the way back.

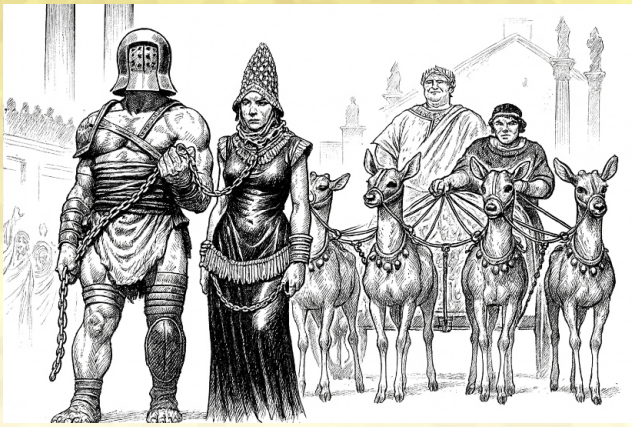
SLAVERY IN KARTH

Slavery is a foundational part of the Karthan economy. Slaves come from many sources: prisoners of war, criminals condemned by the courts, debtors who could not repay what they owed, and foreigners taken in raids or purchased through distant trade. They are bought and sold openly in designated markets, their value determined by age, health, skill, and origin.

The largest slave markets are found near the river districts, where shipments arrive daily. Buyers move among them with professional appraisal, examining muscle, posture, teeth, and temperament. Some slaves are trained artisans or scribes, commanding high prices. Others are destined for hard labor in fields, mines, or construction. Treatment varies widely. A household slave in a wealthy estate may live a relatively stable life, managing affairs or serving in domestic roles. Others endure brutal conditions, especially those sent to labor camps or assigned to dangerous work. The law offers limited protection, but enforcement depends heavily on status and influence.

Freedom granted by an owner is possible, and not uncommon. Freed slaves often remain tied to their former masters through obligation, becoming clients within the same social systems that govern the rest of Karth.

The markets themselves are orderly and heavily regulated. Pens and platforms are arranged by type—laborers, skilled workers, household servants, and those deemed fit for combat. Traders keep records, contracts are witnessed, and taxes are collected on every sale. Guild representatives and state officials are often present, ensuring that business is conducted according to law.



GLADIATORS

From the blood rituals of the Tucarans came one of Karth's most enduring—and troubling—traditions: the arena. What was once a form of sacrifice has become spectacle. Gladiatorial combat is now a public institution, held in great amphitheaters where thousands gather to watch. Officially, these games are no longer offerings to dark powers, but demonstrations of discipline and martial excellence. In practice, little has changed. Most gladiators are slaves—condemned criminals, captured warriors, or those sold specifically for the purpose. They are trained in specialized schools. Victory in the arena brings rewards: better treatment, coin, even the possibility of freedom. Defeat is often final.

Gladiators are both feared and admired. To the common people, they are symbols of raw strength. Successful fighters gain fame, followers, and sometimes influence beyond their station. Their names are shouted in the streets, their victories retold in taverns. But they are still property and ultimately expendable

A skilled gladiator who wins favor may be spared even in defeat. One who fails to impress may be condemned regardless of effort. The will of the people, expressed in noise and gesture, can mean the difference between life and death.

CHARIOT RACING

If the arena is where Karth confronts death, the racetrack is where it celebrates life at its most reckless. Chariot racing is the most popular spectacle in the Republic—faster, louder, and in many ways more beloved than the games of the arena. On race days, the great circuses fill with tens of thousands, their voices rising in a single, thunderous roar that can be heard across the city. Karth's primary racing venue is a vast, oval track of packed earth and stone, long enough to allow for breakneck speed, yet narrow enough to make every turn a gamble. At its center runs the spina, a raised barrier adorned with statues, shrines, and lap markers—often shaped as sacred animals or symbols of the Nine.

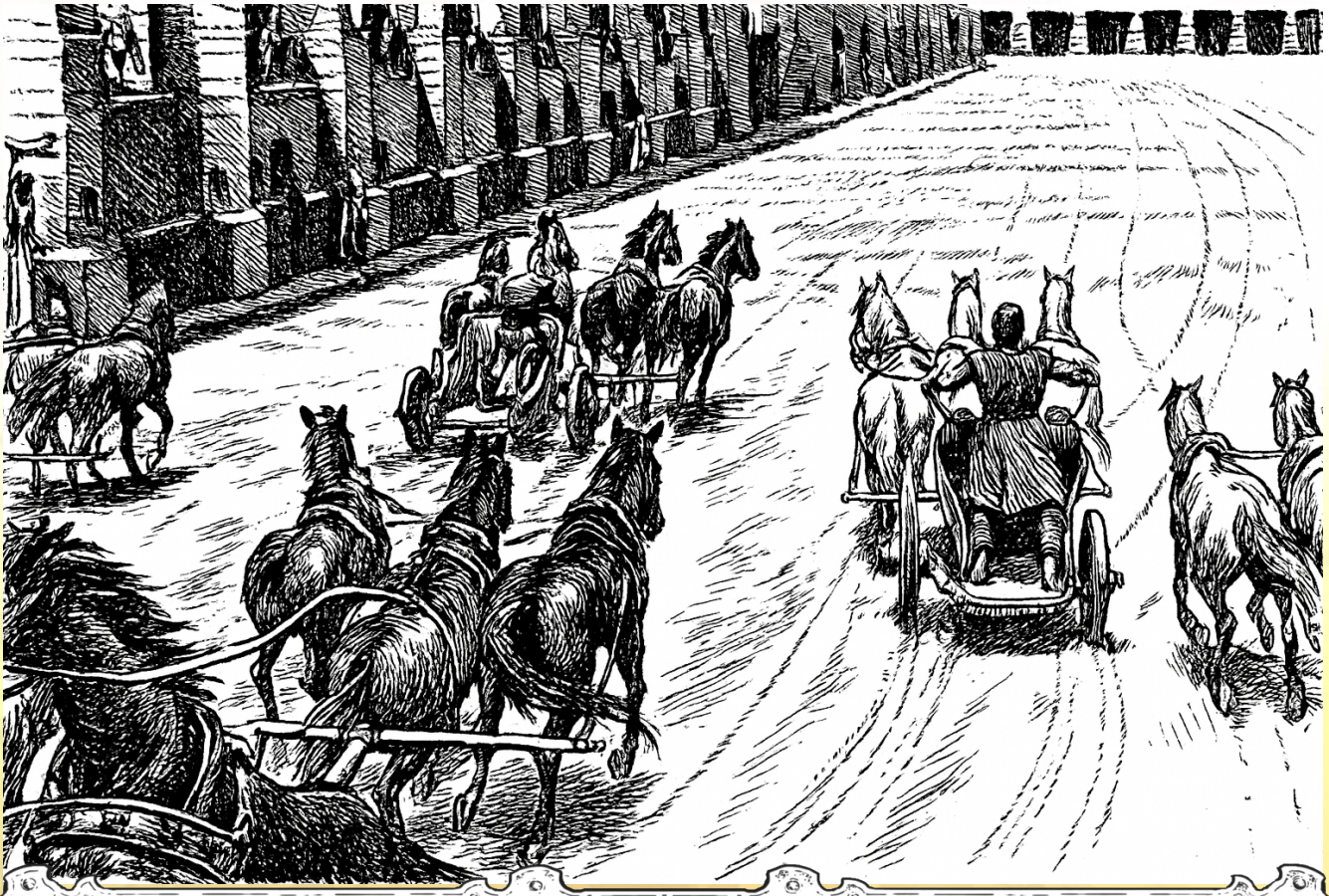
Teams of chariots race in circuits, typically seven laps, whipping around the tight turning posts where most accidents—and deaths—occur. Crashes are common. When a wheel splinters or a horse stumbles, the results are immediate and brutal. Drivers are often dragged, tangled in reins, or crushed beneath the wreckage. Some carry curved blades to cut themselves free in such moments, though few are quick enough.

THE RACING FACTIONS

Charioteers do not race alone. They belong to powerful racing factions, each identified by its colors, symbols, and loyal supporters. These factions are more than sporting teams—they are social forces, with ties to wealthy patrons, political figures, and, in some cases, the collegia. Rivalries run deep and often violent. Supporters wear their faction's colors openly, chanting, celebrating victories, and brawling with opposing fans in the streets. Entire districts of the city may favor one faction over another, and tensions can spill over into riots when tempers flare. For many citizens, allegiance to a racing faction is as strong as loyalty to a patron.

GAMBLING

Where there is racing, there is gambling. Wagers are placed openly on race days, with odds shouted through the crowds and recorded by bookmakers who operate both legally and otherwise. Coins change hands before, during, and after each race, fortunes won and lost in the span of a few heartbeats.



The following rules will allow DMs to recreate the exciting and very dangerous chariot races of Karth. The race is broken up into 9 phases:

1. Out of the gate
2. Lap 1
3. Lap 2
4. Lap 3
5. Lap 4
6. Lap 5
7. Lap 6
8. Lap 7
9. Race for the finish line

During each phase, each participant makes a DEX check. The result grants the driver a certain number of Racing Points, which can be used to affect the race (see below).

▶**Failed roll by 6+** : The chariot crashes. The horses and driver take 2d6 damage each.
▶**Failure**: The driver is forced to reign back. Gains 1 Racing Point.
▶**Success**: The chariot moves without hindrance. Gains 2 Racing Points.
▶**Success by 4+**: The driver manages to gain a little. Gains 3 Racing Points.
▶**Success by 8+**: The driver speeds ahead with efficiency. Gains 4 Racing Points.

After the roll, each character gets to go by order of highest Racing Points. On their turns, characters may attempt to perform Chariot Maneuvers.

▶**Block (Cost 1)**: Block a chariot with fewer Racing Points than you. The blocked chariot loses 2 Racing Points.
▶**Crowding (Cost 2)**: Can be used on someone with the same amount of Racing Points as you, or up to 2 higher or 2 fewer. This act squeezes the other chariot against a barrier or other chariot. The target must make a DEX check. A failure by 6+ causes them to crash. A standard failure causes them to lose 2 Racing Points. A success yields no effect.
▶**Evade Trouble (Cost 2)**: Prevents anyone from crowding or sideswiping you for the remainder of this Phase.
▶**Sideswipe (Cost 3)**: Same as crowding, except if the target fails by 4+, he crashes.

After everyone has gone, the next Phase begins and repeats. By the end of the last Phase, whoever has the most Racing Points wins.

DYEING AND CLEANING

Among the many trades that sustain Karth's economy, few are as essential—or as unglamorous—as the work of dyers and fullers. Karthan fabrics are prized throughout the **Middle Sea** for their range of color and durability. From deep crimsons and royal purples to soft blues and earthen tones, the ability to fix dye properly into cloth is both an art and a science—and one jealously guarded by the collegia that control it. To bind dye to wool, linen, or imported silks, dyers rely on substances known as mordants—agents that fix color permanently into the fibers. Two such materials are in constant demand across the Republic: alum, mined and traded primarily from Kartha Minor, and a far more common, if less celebrated, resource—human urine.

The work of cleaning and preparing cloth falls to the fullers, whose workshops can be found in nearly every Karthan city. These establishments are noisy and unmistakable. Within them, vats of heated water are mixed with collected urine and other agents, creating a pungent solution used to clean raw wool, strip oils from fabric, and prepare it for dyeing. Slaves and laborers stand knee-deep in these tubs, trampling and working the cloth for hours at a time, their work both physically demanding and relentless. Entire districts are known for the smell, and those who live nearby grow accustomed (or learn to endure).

Yet the importance of the trade cannot be overstated. Without the fullers, Karth's textile industry would falter, and with it a significant portion of its wealth.

Such is the demand for urine that Karth has turned even waste into a resource. Throughout the city, large ceramic pots are placed along streets, near tenements, and beside public buildings. Citizens are expected—encouraged, even—to use them. What might otherwise be discarded is instead gathered as a commodity, taxed, and redistributed. At dusk, slaves and laborers move through the streets with carts, collecting the contents of these vessels and transporting them to the fullers' workshops.

GOVERNMENT

The Republic of Karth is ruled by a body of 300 elected representatives who serve on a senate. A young Karthan politician's career begins as early as age 30, which is the minimum age requirement for the lowest rank of political office. Running for government is expensive, which is why typically only people from wealthy families, or who themselves have acquired a lot of wealth, tend to run.

THE ELECTION MECHANICS

In game terms, running for any office is represented by a percentile roll. The odds of winning are:

▶**5%** per character level
▶**5%** per Charisma modifier
▶**5%** per 2,000 platinum dragons (pp) spent on your campaign (games, festivals, bribes, etc.)
▶**Maximum Chance:** 90%

There is no direct pay for holding any senatorial office. Instead, senators earn extra money through bribes from political favors or by passing favorable laws that benefit their own business interests.

POLITICAL RANKS & POSITIONS

The sentate meets in one of two buildings, to honor the two social classes, alternating every other month. The Curia Latharii and the Curia Aristarii.

QUESTOR

▶**Min Age:** 30 | **Term:** 4 years | **Income:** 40 pp
▶**Requirements:** Citizen

▶**Duties:** The lowest rank on the ladder. Responsible for administration, finances, and record-keeping, plus "quests" for higher-level senators.

TEMPLAR

▶**Min Age:** 36 | **Term:** 2 years | **Income:** 100 pp
▶**Requirements:** Citizen, held rank of Questor
▶**Duties:** There are always 4 in office (2 Aristokritian, 2 Pollotion). They maintain public buildings and temples, organize festivals, and approve the construction of new temples.

HIGH PRIEST

▶**Min Age:** 36 | **Term:** Life | **Income:** 150 pp
▶**Requirements:** Citizen, Aristokritian class, held rank of Questor
▶**Duties:** Highest clergy member. Final say on all religious matters, sanctifying temples, and laws regarding burial, marriage, and public morals. Can allow or ban worship of foreign gods.

PALADIN ORDER

▶**Min Age:** 36 | **Term:** Life | **Income:** 25 pp
▶**Requirements:** Citizen, held rank of Questor
▶**Duties:** Joining requires a vote overseen by the High Priest. Assaulting a Paladin is a capital offense. They vote on the Council regarding defense against the occult, demons, and sorcery.

PRAETOR

▶**Min Age:** 39 | **Term:** 1 year | **Income:** 200 pp
▶**Requirements:** Citizen, held rank of Questor
▶**Duties:** Judges of the provinces. There are 9 positions—one for each province (Karth City, Kartha Major, Kartha Minor, Karali, Byrisia, Mauretania, Xelladra, Lyria, and Longwall). They assign Magistrates (who earn 20 pp/year).

CONSUL

▶**Min Age:** 42 | **Term:** 1 year | **Income:** 500 pp
▶**Requirements:** Citizen, held rank of Praetor
▶**Duties:** Two individuals (Consul and Co-Consul) hold power simultaneously. They can veto each other and trade command in one-month intervals. They command legions during wartime.

GOVERNOR

▶**Min Age:** 43 | **Term:** 6 years | **Income:** Varies by Province
▶**Requirements:** Citizen, held rank of Consul
▶**Duties:** Act as "kings" of their provinces. They need Senate approval to go to war or raise legions (unless using their own funds). Most covet this role for the wealth gained through plunder and slaves.

LAW AND ORDER

Armed soldiers are forbidden within Karth's walls. In fact, anyone brandishing a sword is subject to punishment... that is, if anyone can arrest them. In reality, crime is not enforced through any sort of official or regulated legal body. There is no city watch or guard in Karthan cities. Civic order and justice is enforced by the community, and usually through patronclient relationships. If someone falls victim to a crime, he (or she) must handle it themselves. This is done by appealing to their patron (if any) or finding some other way to get justice. If a patron's client is harmed, the typical course of action is for the patron to approach the offender's patron and discuss compensation. If the offender has no patron, then the patron might decide on a course of action himself.
If someone is wealthier or more powerful, then they are pretty much out of luck. If they can somehow apprehend the offender, they can drag them before a Praetor or an appointed magistrate and press charges, at which point the case will go to trial. Trials are presided over by the Praetor or magistrate, and each side can hire a lawyer. The trials are public, and the crowd acts as a jury, so largely these cases are decided on by whichever lawyer is better at rhetoric and playing to the mood of the mob.

Because everyone is responsible for his or her own safety, those who can afford it often hire large groups of slaves or gladiators or a band of adventurers for personal protection. The collegia look out for their own, and neighborhoods have developed street gangs to protect their property.

URBAN COHORTS

The urban cohorts are a group of 900 men who operate on the streets of Karth at night. Originally this group was created to look for fires, and each man carries a bucket of water for this purpose. However, during the time of Lussa, the Dictator expanded their role into night sentry—really, to suppress and murder his political opponents who conspired against him at night. Today, the urban cohorts have a dual role. They still patrol looking for fires, but they also are allowed to carry swords during night hours, and they keep an eye out for criminal activity, such as burglarly.

The urban cohorts report to the city Praetor, and only operate at night, and only in the city of Karth. They are paid 6 cp a day.

ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

The Republic does not believe in long-term imprisonment as punishment. To confine a person for years at great expense serves neither order nor spectacle. Instead, the law is designed to resolve matters quickly—through judgment, penalty, and, when necessary, example.

Authority to detain citizens rests with magistrates, senators, and other officials of rank. In practice, arrests are carried out by city watchmen, soldiers, or hired enforcers acting under legal order—or, at times, under the influence of powerful patrons. A person may be seized for a variety of reasons: theft, violence, debt, public disorder, or accusation by a citizen of standing. In many cases, the manner of arrest depends less on the crime itself and more on who is involved. A well-connected citizen may be summoned to appear before a magistrate. A laborer or foreigner is more likely to be taken in chains.

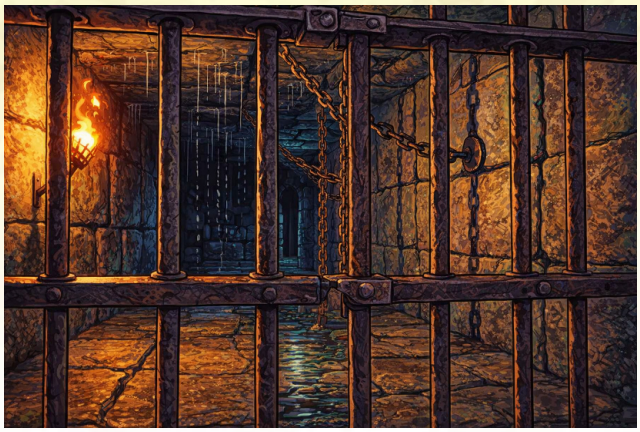
Once detained, the accused is brought before a local authority for initial judgment. Minor matters may be settled immediately—fines imposed, restitution ordered, or punishment carried out on the spot. More serious accusations are referred upward, often to higher magistrates or, in rare cases, the Senate itself.

Those awaiting judgment are confined in temporary holding facilities—commonly referred to as prisons, though they are not meant for long-term habitation. These structures are typically found beneath government buildings, near forums, or adjoining barracks. Some are little more than stone chambers with iron-barred doors, while others descend deeper, into older foundations that predate the Republic itself. Cells are cramped, poorly lit, and rarely clean. Prisoners are given minimal food and water, just enough to sustain them until judgment is passed. There are no comforts, and little distinction is made between the accused—debtors, thieves, and murderers may all be held within earshot of one another.

Once judgment is rendered, the matter is resolved without delay. Punishments vary according to status, crime, and circumstance:

▶Fines are the most common penalty for citizens of means
▶Public beatings or humiliation may be used for lesser offenses
▶Enslavement is frequently imposed on debtors, foreigners, and criminals without protection
▶Condemnation to the arena serves both as punishment and spectacle
▶Execution or exile is reserved for more serious crimes

Citizens of standing often avoid the harshest outcomes, whether through influence, wealth, or negotiation. Those without such protections face the full weight of the law.



PANTHEON

The Karthans honor the Nine. Below are each of them, along with their respective domains.

TRIUM, GOD OF STORMS AND THE SKY

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Tempest, Storm Cloud
King of the Karthan gods

TENUA, GOD OF THE SEA

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Tempest, Large Wave
Patron of merchants and ships

AVRAS, GOD OF WAR

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Upturned Gladius
Patron of the legions

ETHENIA, GODDESS OF LOVE

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Flowing Hair
Wife of Trium, Queen of the Karthan gods

SEVESTA, GODDESS OF HEARTH, FAMILY, AND HEALING

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Robed Woman
Daughter of Trium and Sevesta

LENOA, GODDESS OF WAR, CONQUEST, AND ENSLAVEMENT

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Downturned Bloody Gladius
Wife of Avras

JASNA, GODDESS OF DEATH

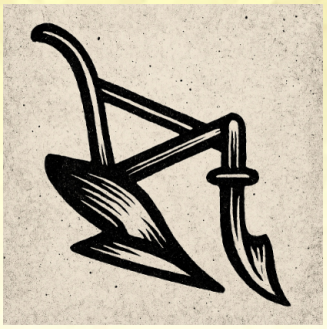
Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Human Skull
Daughter of Avras and Lenoa

EVAVERA, GODDESS OF MUSIC, KNOWLEDGE, AND WISDOM

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: A Lyre
Sister of Trium

MAVAKTRUM, GOD OF AGRICULTURE

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Plow
Brother of Avrus



NPCS

DAMORIX: CENTURION IN LEGIO III

4th-level human fighter

Born of *Aristarri* blood, Damorix is well-known among the legions in and around Karth and Kartha Major. Most new recruits fall under his command for their six months of training. He is a harsh disciplinarian but a fair one. Damorix tends to respect anyone who is a competent warrior… and has a hard time hiding his contempt from anyone not skilled with weapons and warfare. Even though he has a solid reputation and comes from an honored family lineage, Damorix has no desire to enter into politics—which makes him friends on both sides of the fence, since no one views him as a threat.

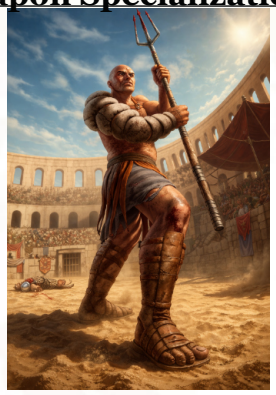
AC 1, **HD** 4 (16hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6 + 2), **THACo** 17 (16 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 13 **CON** 10 **CHA** 11, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Short sword

JASHAT: FAMED NARSEHAN GLADIATOR

6th-level human fighter

Jashat began his career as a bandit in Narseh. He was captured over 10 years ago, and sold as a slave to Xelladran pirates, who sold him as a slave in Atia. He wound up in a gladiator school about 100 miles south of Karth. He had a knack for it, and found he loved the crowds… and they loved him. He's won over 50 bouts, 23 of them ending in the death of his opponent. Even though he could have bought his freedom many times over, he loves the life too much to quit. It's rumored that Jashat has bastard children all across the republic.

AC 8, **HD** 6 (27hp), **Att** 1 × trident (1d6 + 4), **THACo** 17 (16 with trident), **MV** 60' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 16 **INT** 8 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 16 **CON** 15 **CHA** 9, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short sword, spear, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Trident



Amaenwé: Powerful Senator

7th-level elf

Over 30 years ago, Amaenwé journeyed south from Vala Aedain on a mission for her people. In the Land of the Thanes, she met a young human centurion named Galbo who was also on a mission, and separated from his legion. The two were attacked and forced to work together to escape.

Their adventure took them deep into enemy territory, and in the end they had to face a demon, which they slew together.

Afterward, Galbo convinced her to return to Karth. She did, and over time, they developed a relationship, eventually getting married. This granted her citizenship, and eventually she followed Galbo onto the senate.

Amaenwé found that political life was unusual, and just as treacherous as adventuring. And then Lussa came to power. Galbo was one of the many senators murdered during his reign. She was spared because she was an elf, and Lussa found a sort of kinship with her. His mistake. She joined with Zolcaf the Paladin and the other adventurers who slew him, bringing order back to the republic. Since then, she has remained with the senate, and has grown into a very influential figure.

AC 2, **HD** 7 (25hp), **Att** 1 × *gladius +2* (1d6 + 2), **THACo** 14 (11 with her *gladius +2*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P9 B10 S10, **STR** 9 **INT** 15 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 15 **CON** 8 **CHA** 14, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short bow, short sword, spear, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Gladius, **Spells** *read magic*, *ventriloquism*, *sleep*, *phantasmal force*, *detect invisible*, *protection from normal missiles*, *haste*, *confusion*, **Possessions** *gladius +2*, *mail +1*, spell scrolls (*continual light*, *hold portal*, *read magic*)

GAIUS VARRO LETHANIS: GOVERNOR OF BYRISIA

3rd-level human fighter

Gaius is a man shaped as much by patience as by ambition. Now in his sixth decade, he was not born to great prominence, but rose through the lower ranks of the Senate through careful alliances, measured speech, and an uncanny ability to survive political upheaval. In his youth, he served briefly as a military officer along the southern coasts, where he earned modest distinction putting down pirate raids, though some whisper he learned more from them than he ever admitted. Appointed governor twelve years ago, Lethanis has maintained Byrisia as one of the Republic's most stable provinces, balancing its competing interests with a steady hand. Trade flows cleanly under his watch, taxes arrive on time, and open rebellion has never taken root (though discontent quietly lingers beneath the surface). He is known for his calm demeanor, his sharp memory, and his refusal to act without clear advantage. Unlike many of his peers, he avoids spectacle, preferring quiet control to public displays of power. Those who underestimate him rarely do so twice.

AC 10, **HD** 3 (11hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19 (18 with dagger), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 11 **INT** 15 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 10 **CON** 11 **CHA** 14, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short sword, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Dagger

SERA VALYRA

4th-level human beast master

Sera Valyra, once a prized huntress in service to Karth, built her reputation tracking and capturing rare beasts from the wild frontiers of the east. For years, she supplied exotic creatures to nobles, arenas, and collectors, earning both wealth and favor for her unmatched skill. It was said no creature could evade her—not lion, drake, nor scaled horrors dragged from distant jungles. Everything changed when she began to hear them. It was a sudden connection she could not ignore. She vanished soon after.

Now, Sera wages a quiet war against the very trade she once served, striking at hunters, slavers, and merchants who profit from captured creatures.

AC 5, **HD** 4 (12hp), **Att** 1 × sling (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P12 B15 S16, **STR** 9 **INT** 13 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 17 **CON** 15 **CHA** 9, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Short sword, sling, spear

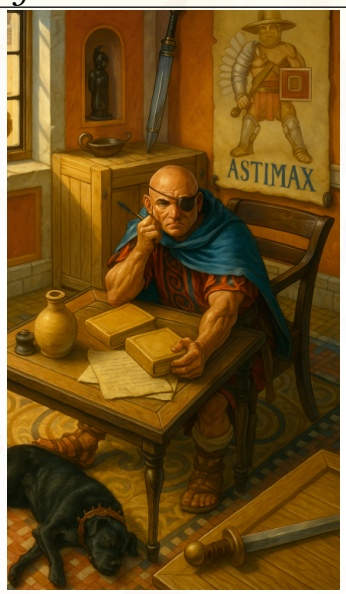
DRAVUS KORRIN: GLADIATOR MASTER

8th-level human fighter

Dravus Korrin, once one of the most celebrated fighters in the arenas of Karth, now commands respect from a very different position—master of his own gladiator school.

Born a slave and sold into the pits as a youth, Dravus survived where countless others did not. Over the course of nearly fifteen years, he fought in more than seventy bouts, earning a reputation for strategy rather than brute savagery. When he was finally granted his freedom, Dravus invested his winnings—and the backing of a powerful patron—into founding his own *ludus*, a gladiator school on the outskirts of Karth. There, he trains fighters with the same discipline that carried him through the arena: endurance, control, and above all, survival.

AC 9, **HD** 8 (30hp), **Att** 1 × *crossbow +1* (1d6+1) or *gladius +1* (1d6+2), **THACo** 14 (14 with *crossbow +1* or *gladius +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 13 **CON** 15 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, javelin, short sword, spear **Weapon Specializations** Crossbow, short sword **Posessions** *Crossbow +1*, *gladius +1*, *potion of invisibility*



REN OF KARTH: KARTHAN PRIEST AND MONSTER HUNTER

4th-level human cleric/1st-level fighter

Ren was born in Karth, shortly after the reign of Lussa. His grandfather and one of his uncles were murdered by the tyrant, and Ren grew up in that legacy. One of his early patrons was Zolcaf, the famed paladin who helped put an end to those dark times, and Ren joined the legions at an early age. But after it was discovered he held the divine spark, he was transferred to the College of Clerics. After his training and education, he returned the legions, eventually rising to the rank of Centurion.

For the past five years, even though officially attached to Legio VI, Ren is often sent on missions around the republic to hunt and slay dangerous monsters, which he has grown quite good at.

AC 4, **HD** 5 (21hp), **Att** 1 × *gladius +1* (1d6+2), **THACo** 19 (17 with *gladius +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D11 W12 P14 B15 S15, **STR** 14 **INT** 10 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 13 **CON** 14 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short sword, spear **Weapon Specializations** Short sword **Posessions** *gladius +1*, **Spells** *cure light wounds*, *remove fear*, *hold person*

BORIN THRAEGAR: MERCENARY

3rd-level dwarf

Borin Thraegar, a dwarf of the deep halls of Throle in Longwall Province, left his mountain home to see the outside world—a decision many of his kin quietly questioned.

Among his people, tradition runs as deep as stone, and few willingly trade the certainty of the halls for the shifting fortunes of the surface world. Borin did.

For over a decade, he has walked the southern roads of Karth, hiring his axe and shield as a caravan guard. He has escorted merchant trains through bandit country, across dry plains, and along treacherous mountain passes, earning a reputation. Borin makes himself available as a retainer to those who can afford his price.

AC 3, **HD** 3 (19hp), **Att** 1 × hand axe (1d6+3), **THACo** 19 (18 with hand axe), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B13 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 9 **CON** 17 **CHA** 8, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, hand axe, short sword, **Weapon Specializations** Hand axe

CASSIA ELARA: REBEL

3rd-level human ranger

Cassia Elara, once the daughter of a respected Karthan senator, was raised among marble halls, educated in rhetoric, law, and the quiet expectations of noble life. At sixteen, she accompanied her father to Longwall Province, where he had been sent to oversee matters along the frontier. There, for the first time, she witnessed the realities of Karth's expansion—Denaari captives in chains, their lands occupied, their people treated as little more than obstacles to be managed.

It unsettled her more than she let on. Not long after, while traveling with a small escort to inspect the outer territories, her caravan was ambushed under cover of night. The attack was swift and merciless. Guards were cut down, servants scattered, and Aelia herself was taken alive.

She was brought before a Denaari war band and held as a hostage—valuable, but not untouchable. In the weeks that followed, she expected ransom, rescue, or death. Instead, something else took root. The son of the chieftain, tasked with overseeing her captivity, came to know her—not as a prize, but as a person. What began as cautious conversation grew into something deeper, something neither of them fully understood.

When the time came for her fate to be decided, Aelia made her choice. She stayed.

Years have passed since then. Aelia has taken on the ways of the Denaari, learning their language, their customs, and their warcraft. She fights now not as a captive, but as one of them—striking against Karthan patrols, sabotaging supply lines, and resisting further encroachment into lands she has come to see as her own.

To Karth, she is a traitor. To the Denaari, she is something more complicated. And to her father, she is a ghost who chose the wilderness over the world that raised her, and the Denaari are his sworn enemy, whom he blames for her fall.

AC 3, **HD** 3 (11hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+1), **THACo** 19 (18 with spear), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 9 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 17 **CON** 12 **CHA** 11, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, sling, spear **Weapon Specializations** Spear

PHOLOS THE WICKED: THIEVE'S GUILD CAPTAIN

3rd-level human thief / 3rd-level assassin

Hailing from Xelladra, Pholos was a thief who moved to Karth nearly 15 years ago, where he joined one of the thieves guilds. He quickly worked his way up the ranks, and now is the head thief of the largest guild in Karth (of which there are currently 3). Under his leadership, his group (of which there are just over 100 members) have taken over the smuggling and gambling rackets.

AC 5, **HD** 6 (14hp), **Att** 1 × *dagger +2* (1d4+2), **THACo** 19 (17 with *dagger +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P12 B15 S14, **STR** 10 **INT** 15 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 11 **CHA** 14, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, short sword **Possessions** *dagger +2*, *ring of protection* **Back stab / Assassinate** +4 to hit from behind, double damage, save versus death or die

CASSOR VALEN DRAVUS: SENATOR

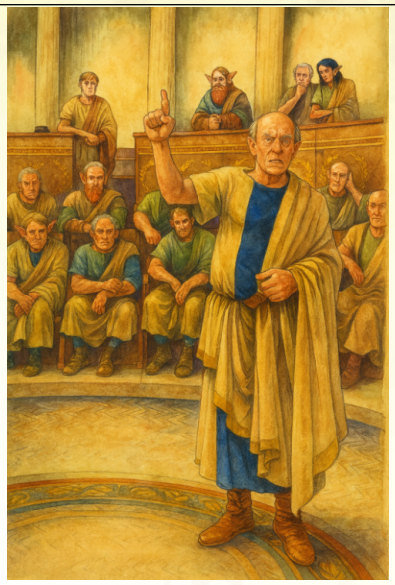
Normal human

Cassor Valen Dravus, senior senator of Karth, is a man whose influence extends far beyond the marble halls of the Senate. Now in his seventh decade, he has spent nearly his entire life within the machinery of the Republic, rising from a respected but unremarkable lineage into one of the most powerful voices in Karthan politics. Cassor is not a man of passion, but of strategy. Where others speak to inspire, he speaks to persuade. His words are measured and rarely wasted, carrying a weight that comes not from experience. He is known to listen far more than he speaks, and when he does, it is often to bring debate to a quiet and unavoidable conclusion. Over the years, he has aligned himself with powerful patrons, guild interests, and provincial governors, weaving a network of obligation and

influence that few can rival. He does not command loyalty through charisma, but through necessity—those who deal with him prosper, and those who oppose him often find themselves isolated, outmaneuvered, or quietly removed from relevance.

Cassor likes to use adventurers for some of his more clandestine work, whose services he pays handsomely.

Use normal human stats.



CASSIVAR LETHANUS: NOBLEMAN
3rd-level human necromancer

Cassivar Lethanus, heir to an old *Aristarii* line, came into power sooner than expected. When his father died under quiet and uncertain circumstances three years ago, Cassivar inherited not only the family estates, but its debts, obligations, and carefully maintained reputation within Karth's noble circles.

During renovations of the family's ancestral estate, Cassivar discovered a hidden passage descending into ancient catacombs—far older than the house itself. There, in chambers thick with dust and the remnants of long-forgotten rites, he found his father's work: journals, diagrams, preserved remains, and evidence of sustained study into forbidden necromantic arts.

More troubling still was the name that appeared again and again: Lussa. According to the writings, Lussa had sought to transcend death itself—pursuing a form of immortality that would allow him to one day return and claim what he believed was rightfully his as a lich. And Cassivar's father was helping him.

Cassivar did not destroy these findings. He continued them. In secret, he has gathered a small but devoted circle—scholars, outcasts, and those willing to risk much for promised power. Above ground, Cassivar remains the picture of a proper Karthan noble. Below, he builds something far more dangerous. Should his efforts succeed, the consequences would reach far beyond his house—or even Karth itself.

AC 10, **HD** 3 (5hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 10 **INT** 15 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 11 **CHA** 14, **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short sword **Spells** *command dead, read magic, seal tomb*

LUCIUS AVRALIS: CURRENT GOVERNOR OF MAURETANIA
7th-level human fighter

Born of *Aristarri* blood, Lucius Avralis is easily one of the most cunning and ambitious people in the Republic. His family, Avralis, believes they are descended from Avra, the God of War. As a young man, Lucius had to flee Karth during the rule of Lussa, but returned after Lussa was killed. He now currently sits as governor (just beginning his 3rd year out of 6) in Mauretania Province, where he wages an ongoing war with the local hill dwarf tribes, who are rebelling against Karthan rule.

AC 4, **HD** 7 (32hp), **Att** 1 × gladius (1d6), **THACo** 14 (13 with gladius), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 12 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 10 **CON** 10 **CHA** 18, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, sword **Weapon Specializations** Gladius **Possessions** *lorica hamata +1, amulet of protection against scrying, medallion of ESP 90', potion of invulnerability*

RASHA AVRALIS: CENTURION IN LEGIO XVIII
4th-level human fighter

Rasha is Lucius's only child, and the most highly decorated centurion in the 19th Legion, serving in Mauretania under her father. Rasha's mother died during childbirth, and she is fiercely loyal to Lucius. Unbeknownst to him, she secretly has feelings for his political ally, Karamus the Younger, even though he is nearly 15 years her senior.

AC 2, **HD** 4 (16hp), **Att** 2 × gladius (1d6+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with gladius if single attack; if both gladii, then 18 for first attack, and 20 for the second), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 9 **INT** 12 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 16 **CON** 10 **CHA** 13, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sword **Weapon Specializations** Gladius

KARAMUS THE YOUNGER: FORMER CENTURION IN LEGIO I, FORMER GENERAL, AND FORMER KARTHAN SENATOR
7th-level half-orc

Son of the famous Karamus, Karamus the Younger is now a powerful and respected general in his own right, having earned a great reputation and wealth battling pirates. He has since began a political career, using his reputation to his advantage. Like his father, he has great ambitions, and recently he has allied himself with Lucius Avralis. He plans on asking Lucius's permission for his daughter's hand in marriage to seal the pact.

AC 5, **HD** 7 (31hp), **Att** 1 × *spatha +2* (1d8+4), **THACo** 14 (10 with *spatha +2*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 12 **CON** 14 **CHA** 12, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sword **Weapon Specializations** Gladius, spatha **Possessions** *Ring of water walking, spatha +2*

XERATHEIA: MEDUSA

Xeratheia, a medusa of Thessadonian origin, has dwelled for decades in the forested hills of the mountains on the Karthan peninsula. Now well over a century old, she is a creature of patience and cunning—rarely seen, but widely whispered about in the surrounding villages.

Once, it is said, she lived among others of her kind in the distant lands of Thessadonia, but something drove her into exile. Her lair lies hidden among rocky outcroppings and dense woodland, a place marked by unnatural stillness. Statues—once living creatures—stand scattered throughout the area, half-swallowed by roots and moss.

Local witches, hedge-mages, and certain desperate scholars sometimes seek her out, for the venom of the serpents that crown her head is a substance of rare potency. When properly harvested, it can be used in powerful alchemical brews, curses, and rituals not openly practiced within Karth. Such dealings are dangerous—but not impossible. Xeratheia accepts visitors under strict rules. Those who come must announce themselves, avert their gaze, and offer payment worthy of her time. Gold and gemstones are preferred, which she hoards within her cavernous lair, adding to a growing treasure amassed over many years.

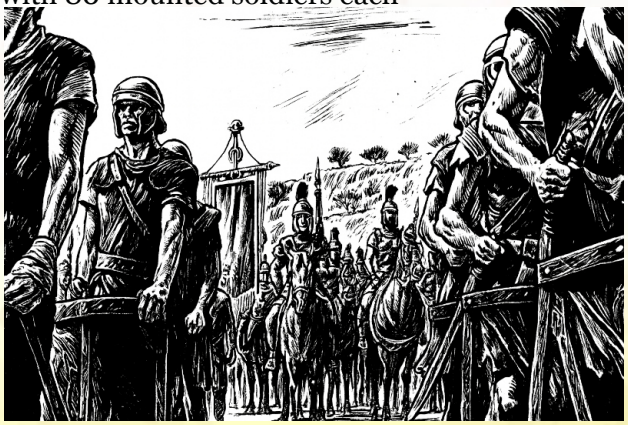
Though feared, she is not needlessly cruel. She does not hunt beyond her territory, nor does she interfere with nearby settlements unless provoked. To some, she is a monster. To others, a necessary evil.

Use medusa stats.

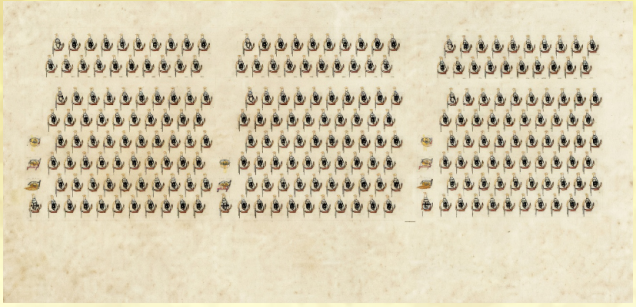
THE KARTHAN MILITARY

The Karthan military machine is divided up into legions. Each legion is a force of 5,000 soldiers, with 4,000 being combatants, and 1,000 being support. A legion costs 61,000 platinum pieces a year.

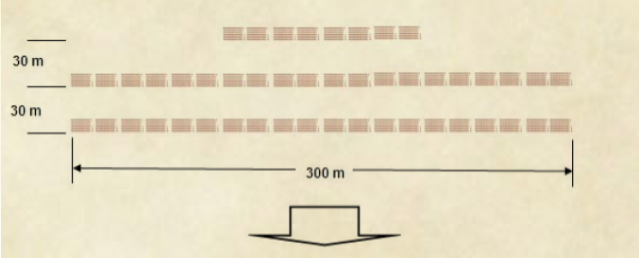
▶Each legion is divided up into 8 cohorts
▶A cohort is divided up into 16 units
▶Each unit is divided up into 3 centuries
▶A century has 100 men assigned to it (80 combatants + 20 non-combatants)
▶There are 48 centuries in a legion
▶Each century is led by an officer, known as a centurion
▶And finally, each legion has 2 units of cavalry, with 80 mounted soldiers each



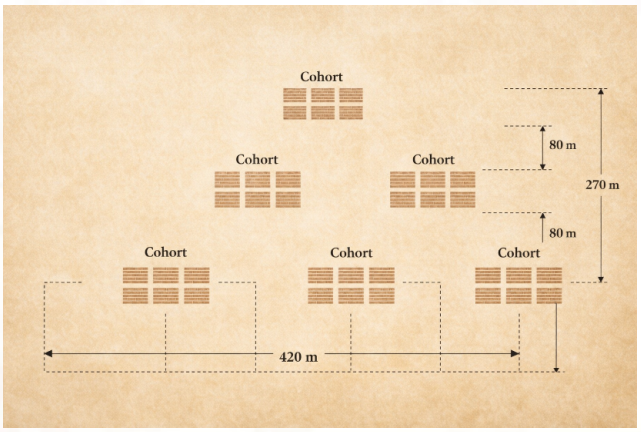
This is what three centuries fighting side-by-side looks:



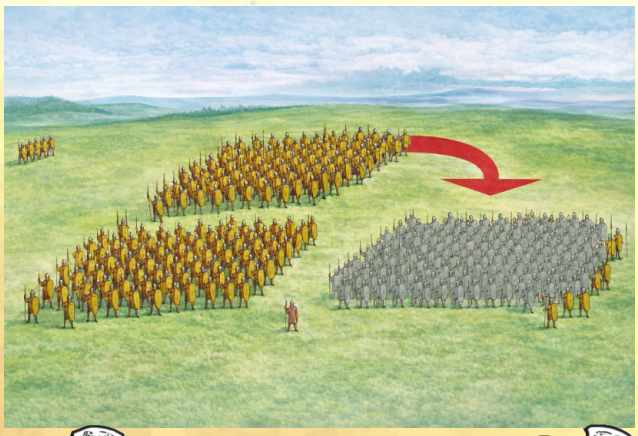
And here is what all 48 centuries look like when arrayed out on the field of battle:



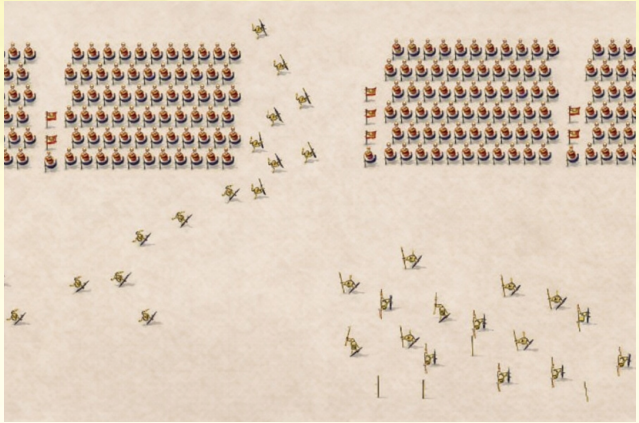
Here is an alternate, "checkerboard" formation:



The checkerboard formation allows the cohorts to be more flexible on the battlefield:



The gaps between individual centuries and cohorts allows skirmisher units to retreat more easily behind the lines when pressed by the enemy, at which point the legionaries can charge forward, throwing their javelins and engaging with shield and sword.



UNITS

Below are the stats for the various units in a legion, for use during Mass Combat.

VETERANS (×8 per legion)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 4
TOTAL HD: 400
MV: 20' **DAMAGE**: 1d6+2 (gladius), 1d4 (pila)
QUALITY: Elite
FOOT TYPE: Medium **CATEGORY**: Impact
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon, Swordsmen
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Pila vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Pila vs. Light Foot: +1

EXPERIENCED (×10 per legion)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 20' **DAMAGE**: 1d6+2 (gladius), 1d4 (pila)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Medium **CATEGORY**: Impact
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon, Swordsmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Pila vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Pila vs. Light Foot: +1

STANDARD (×26 per legion)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 20' **DAMAGE**: 1d6+2 (gladius), 1d4 (pila)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium **CATEGORY**: Impact
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon, Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Pila vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Pila vs. Light Foot: +1

SKIRMISHERS (×4 per legion)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6+2 (gladius), 1d4 (pila)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon, Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Pila vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Pila vs. Light Foot: +1

CAVALRY (×2 per legion)
TOTAL TROOPS: 80 **HD**: 4
TOTAL HD: 400
MV: 80' **DAMAGE**: 1d6+1 (spear), gladius (1d6+1)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Skirmishers
ABILITIES: Spearmen, Swordsmen
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
- Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
- Light Large vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +3
- Light Large vs. Light Foot: +2
- Defensive or Offensive Spear (see **Core Rulebook**).

ECABATANA

Capital: Kart-Hadast
Demographics: 86% human, 10% hill dwarf elf, 1% half-elf, 1% dragonborn, 2% other
Notable Settlements: Kirtsan (50,000 families; Market Value III) and Kart-Hadast (90,000 families; Market Value II)
Population: 3.3 million people
Government: Monarchy
Ruler: King Jagartha I
Annual Treasury: 550,000 pp (roughly 400,000 pp in the royal treasury)
Expenses: 400,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Rugs of exotic hides, bolts of silk, ivory, spices, incense, slaves, exotic animals
Demand Values: Alum +2, amber -2, dyes -1, exotic hides -1, fish -1, glasswares -1, grain +1, hides +1, horses -1, iron +3, ivory -2, lead +1, lumber +4, luxury goods -1, olive oil -1, rugs -1, slaves -1, spices -1, wine -1, wool -1
Beasts of Peril: androsphinx, bulette, camels, chuul, displacer beast, dog, dragon turtle, dust mephit, earth elemental, efreet, elephant, flying snake, ghast, ghost, ghoul, giant centipede, giant crab, giant hyena, guardian naga, giant poisonous snake, giant scorpion, gynosphinx, hunter shark, jackalwere, lamia, lion, manticore, marid, rhinoceros, scorpionmen, vampire, wraith

Ecabatana gained its independence after the fall of Byrisia, having suffered under its rule for nearly a century. As a vassal of Byrisia, it was drawn into repeated wars with Karth, and by the end of those conflicts its king lay dead on a distant battlefield, leaving behind three sons.

Karth, already strained, chose not to annex the region outright. Instead, the realm was divided among the three heirs, ensuring Ecabatana would remain fractured and unlikely to threaten the Republic again. That division did not last.

An illegitimate half-brother of one of the kings raised his son, Jagartha, with a singular purpose. Through intrigue, assassination, bribery, and quieter methods that left little trace, Jagartha eliminated his rivals one by one. In time, all three kings were dead, and Ecabatana was united once more under a single ruler.

Karth protested, but Jagartha proved as skilled in politics as he was in bloodshed. Senators were bribed, debts were called in, and the matter was buried. Tensions worsened. Three years ago, a Karthan senator named Avarus attempted to prosecute corruption within the Senate tied to Jagartha's influence. He was assassinated before proceedings could begin. No proof ever surfaced, though few doubted the source.

A year ago, an Ecabatanan town attempted to defect to Karth. Jagartha responded by slaughtering the entire population, including over two hundred Karthan citizens, most of them merchants. Now the Senate debates war. Jagartha's allies continue to delay action, but a growing faction led by Karamus the Younger presses for intervention. For now, Ecabatana remains at peace—if such a thing can be said of a kingdom where every court hides a knife, and every harbor hides a secret.

CULTURE

Ecabatana is a fertile land. Corn, wine, and olives grow across its plains, while horses, sheep, and cattle are raised in the uplands. Most people live close to the land, and even those in the cities still measure wealth in harvests, herds, and caravans that arrive before the dry winds.

The prosperity of the region shaped everything that followed. Land became power. Power became inheritance. Over time, landowners hardened into aristocracy, and the aristocracy became the law of the land in all but name. Ecabatanan culture is built on ambition, reputation, and control. Status is not only what a person owns, but what others believe they can take or lose.

The social structure is rigid: slaves, commoners, military, and nobility. Movement between these classes is rare, and when it happens, it is usually the result of war, debt, or favor from above rather than personal achievement.

Slaves are a visible part of daily life in both city and countryside. They work fields, serve households, row ships, and maintain estates. In some regions they are prisoners of war, in others debt-bound families, and in the eastern trade ports they are treated as a form of currency as much as labor.

Commoners form the backbone of the kingdom. Farmers, craftsmen, sailors, caravan hands, and minor traders all fall into this group. Most will never leave the district or province of their birth, but many are tied into long trade networks that stretch across Ecabatana and beyond.

The military is a separate class, not simply a profession. Soldiers are recruited from common stock but do not fully belong to it once inducted. They are rotated through cities and provinces, paid directly by the crown, and used as both protection and enforcement. In many towns, a soldier is the only representative of royal authority most people ever see in person.

Nobility sits above this entire structure. Nobles are known as Sultans, and each rules their estate as a personal domain. On paper they answer to the king. In practice, they rule as long as they maintain loyalty, tribute, and enough force to discourage interference.

Some Sultan estates are large enough to contain towns, markets, and fortified inner districts. Guards patrol their roads. Taxes are collected at the gate. Justice is administered in the lord's hall.

Above many Sultans stand the *navaras*, cavalry lords whose authority comes from mounted power. A navara is defined by ownership and command of at least fifty war-ready mounts. These horses are not just wealth; they are the backbone of private war. Navaras often control wide rural regions, caravan routes, and frontier passes.

In Ecabatana, authority is often imposed visibly. A farmer knows which noble's riders patrol his road. A merchant knows which house

controls the harbor gates. A caravan master knows which bribes are expected before he even enters a city.

Justice is uneven but likewise just as visible. Disputes are often settled by payment, patronage, or intimidation rather than formal law. Written decrees exist, but enforcement depends entirely on who has soldiers nearby. Violence is not constant, but it is never considered unusual.

In the cities, wealth is displayed openly and deliberately. Silk garments dyed in imported colors, gold jewelry worked into animal and geometric forms, rare beasts kept in private courtyards, and exotic goods from across the **Middle Sea** all serve as markers of status. Even slaves are sometimes dressed in ways that reflect their owner's prestige.

Feasts are central to noble life. Some last a single night, others stretch across several days, with guests rotating in and out as musicians, dancers, and storytellers perform continuously. It is common for political agreements to be made during these gatherings, sealed between courses of food and wine.

Rumors of magic circulate freely in these environments. Foreign trinkets are often sold as enchanted. Some nobles maintain collections of supposed relics: sealed lamps, carved idols, inscribed rings, and bottles said to contain spirits. Whether real or not is less important than whether others believe they are real.

Outside the cities, status is quieter but no less rigid. Power is measured in land, herds, water access, and the number of armed men a household can call upon. A rural estate may appear peaceful, but most are lightly fortified, with watch towers, stockades, and armed retainers.

Villages tend to cluster around wells, rivers, or caravan stops. Life follows the rhythm of planting and harvest, but always with awareness of passing armies, raiders, or tax collectors.

Travel between regions is possible but never casual. Roads are safe only in stretches controlled by a known authority.

Most Ecabatanans view the world as something filled with unseen forces that pass through it rather than reside in it. Storms, droughts, plague, and fortune are often interpreted as movements of distant powers or echoes of older ages. The gods are acknowledged, but not always trusted. Spirits are believed to linger in deserts, ruins, and places where the world feels "thin."

In the coastal cities, sailors tell stories of islands that appear only once every few years. In the desert routes, caravaners speak of obelisks that shift position when no one is watching. In the trade routes through Axumar, hunters return with accounts they rarely repeat twice in the same way.

CITIES AND NOMADS OF ECABATANA

Most of Ecabatana's people live outside its cities. The land itself does not belong to the cities so much as it belongs to those who move across it. Villages are scattered across the fertile plains like fixed points in a much larger system of movement, while nomadic tribes travel in wide seasonal circuits, following water, pasture, and tradition rather than borders.

These two ways of life are not separate worlds. They are interdependent parts of the same economy, even if each insists the other is inferior. After the harvest season, nomadic clans descend from the open ranges and high pastures into the cultivated lands. Their herds are allowed to graze on the stubble fields, which clears old growth and naturally fertilizes the soil. In exchange, the nomads bring goods that cannot be easily produced in settled towns: wool, milk, cured meats, fine leather, and sometimes slaves taken from distant raids or rival clans. This exchange is not regulated by a single central authority so much as it is governed by long-standing custom, local power, and the threat of retaliation if agreements are violated.

Nomads are not impoverished wanderers. Their wealth is portable and often considerable. A wealthy nomad tent contains finely woven textiles dyed in rare pigments, weapons inlaid with bone or silver, and herds bred for strength and endurance rather than mere survival. Their status is measured in animals, dependents, and knowledge of terrain rather than land ownership. They know where the hidden wells are in drought seasons, which mountain passes remain open during winter, and which valleys belong to which bloodlines even when no boundary is marked on the ground.

City dwellers regard nomads as uncivilized and unstable, people who have not yet learned discipline or permanence. Nomads, in turn, see city dwellers as dependent on systems they do not understand, men and women who have forgotten how to survive without walls. Both perspectives contain truth, and neither is entirely fair.

ENTERING A CITY

Approaching a city in Ecabatana is a gradual surrender of autonomy rather than a simple arrival. Long before the gates, traffic begins to slow. Caravans cluster together. Individuals begin to watch one another more carefully, because information becomes valuable at the edge of authority.

At the gates, entry is controlled by armed inspectors who record names, origin, cargo, and intent. A soldier asks where you are from, what you carry, and where you intend to go. Not always in that order. Behind him, scribes mark information on wax tablets or scratched clay boards.

Wealthy travelers are processed quickly because they are already understood as part of the system. Poorer travelers or unfamiliar groups are inspected more thoroughly, and sometimes delayed until payment is made for entry clearance or inspection fees.

Once inside, movement is structured by district. Wealthy districts contain wide streets, colonnaded walkways, and guarded estates. Merchant districts are dense with workshops, warehouses, and exchange houses. Lower

districts are crowded, loud, and organized around necessity rather than comfort.

INNS

Across the land of Ecabatana lie countless fortified roadside inns known as *caravanserai*. They are built to support travelers, merchants, and caravans along major trade routes in the kingdom. A *caravanserai* is typically a large, enclosed structure, often rectangular, with thick outer walls and a single heavy gate. When night fell, caravans need somewhere they can lock down, protect their goods, and not get wiped out.

Inside, the layout is very consistent:

- ▶A central open courtyard where animals like camels, horses, and donkeys were kept
- ▶Raised platforms or rooms around the edges where travelers slept
- ▶Storage areas for goods like spices, silk, metals, etc.
- ▶Wells or cisterns for water
- ▶Sometimes kitchens, baths, or even small markets

Some have additional rooftop sleeping areas of many cots, protected from the sky by yawnings but otherwise open to the elements but still protected by lack of exterior access (except for scaling).

Functionally, *caravanserais* are spaced about a day's journey apart, creating a kind of infrastructure network for commerce. Without them, long-distance trade would be far more dangerous and inefficient.

The *caravanserai* are also the standard place for the weary traveler within a city. In the shadows of soaring minarets and the salt-cracked walls of the Jewel Cities of Ecabatana, the *caravanserai* serves as both a sanctuary and a counting house. They are the terrestrial anchors of merchant-princes, retired *janissaries*, and sorcerous cabals who use the flow of travelers to map the shifting currents of political power.

The *Malik*—the master of the house—is often a keen-eyed observer, perhaps a retired rogue or a dwarf with a nose for the purity of coin, who calculates a traveler's social weight before a single word is exchanged.

Within the walls, the air is thick with the scent of burning frankincense and the low hum of a dozen languages. The attendants function as refined information brokers, delivering platters of saffron-stained rice and roasted manticore while whispering of which desert tracks are currently haunted by efreet or which Vizier has fallen from grace.

Travelers of low station or questionable intent finds themselves relegated to the central courtyard. Under the watchful eyes of archers perched on the inner galleries, these wanderers share space with groaning camels and braying donkeys, sleeping atop their own gear with a hand on their hilt. In these common spaces, the food is a functional fuel—leavened flatbread, bitter olives, and wine cut so heavily with well-water that it barely stains the cup.

LAW AND ORDER

Law in Ecabatana is not a single codified system that applies uniformly across the realm. It is a layered structure of authority that changes depending on geography, circumstance, and the power of those present when an offense occurs. In practice, legality is not determined by abstract statute but by which authority is able to successfully assert control over an incident and enforce its outcome.

At the highest level stands the authority

of King Jagartha, whose laws are enforced through the Royal Garrison Army. These soldiers are not tied to any single city or region. They are rotated regularly across the realm to prevent local loyalties from forming, and their ultimate allegiance is to the crown rather than to any provincial ruler. Their primary responsibility is the enforcement of imperial order: the protection of royal interests, the maintenance of major trade routes, the suppression of rebellion, and the adjudication of crimes that cross regional boundaries or threaten the stability of the kingdom as a whole. When the royal army asserts jurisdiction over a matter, all other claims to authority are, in principle, subordinate to it.

ROYAL GUARD

AC 4, **HD** 3 (13hp), **Att** 1 × broadsword (1d8+2), **THACo** 19 (17 with broadsword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 13 **INT** 8 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 14 **CON** 11 **CHA** 9, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Short sword, spear, sword **Weapon Specializations** Broadsword

Beneath this imperial layer are the Sultans and regional estate-holders, each of whom maintains their own armed forces. These Sultanate Guards are responsible for the day-to-day enforcement of order within cities, provinces, and estates. They regulate markets, enforce local taxes, intervene in disputes between citizens, and maintain curfews and district security. While they are formally subject to the authority of Jagartha, in practice their loyalty is divided between the crown and their immediate patron. In times of stability, they cooperate with royal forces. In times of tension, they interpret imperial directives selectively, delay enforcement, or quietly resist interference in local affairs.

At the most immediate level are the gate inspectors, market wardens, caravan officers, and other civil enforcers who operate at the edges of daily life. These individuals are not soldiers in the formal sense, but they are empowered to detain individuals, inspect goods, collect tolls, and maintain order within their assigned domains. Their authority is practical rather than legal. They act first and justify later, and their decisions are shaped as much by bribes, reputation, and visible wealth as by any formal rule.

Because of this structure, law in Ecabatana is not experienced as a fixed system but as a gradient of force. When an incident occurs, it is not immediately processed through a judicial framework. Instead, it is first handled by whoever is physically present. Guards intervene, witnesses act, and disputes are often resolved in the moment through coercion, negotiation, or violence. Only afterward does the question of jurisdiction arise: which authority will claim responsibility for what has occurred.

Once an authority asserts control over an incident, the matter is transferred into that system's internal process. For minor offenses such as petty theft, public disorder, or insult, this process is immediate and administrative. Punishment is often administered on the spot in the form of fines, confiscation of goods, physical discipline, or short-term detention. These decisions are not subject to formal trial, as they are considered matters of enforcement rather than judgment.

More serious disputes—particularly those involving trade contracts, debts, property ownership, or commercial fraud—are handled through administrative hearings conducted by magistrates or guild-appointed officials. These proceedings resemble courts only in appearance. In practice, they function as structured negotiations in which testimony, reputation, and political influence determine the outcome. The goal is not to establish objective truth but to arrive at an enforceable settlement that preserves economic stability and reinforces the authority of the ruling institution.

Crimes that threaten the political or military order of the realm, such as murder of officials, large-scale fraud, tax evasion, or acts of rebellion, are escalated to military or noble adjudication. These cases are rarely impartial. They are resolved by commanders, high magistrates, or councils of authority whose decisions are shaped by political necessity as much as by evidence. Outcomes in such cases are often determined before proceedings begin, with the formal process serving to legitimize an already decided result.

Detention within Ecabatana follows the same layered structure as enforcement itself. There is no single prison system. Instead, there are multiple forms of containment. At the lowest level are holding cells located at gates, markets, and military posts, used for short-term confinement of suspects, drunks, and minor offenders. More serious detainees are transferred to district lockhouses operated by Sultans, where individuals may remain for extended periods while awaiting hearings, paying debts through labor, or negotiating release through patronage or payment. At the highest level are royal stockades maintained by the imperial army, reserved for political prisoners, rebels, and individuals whose offenses are considered matters of state rather than local concern.

Punishment in Ecabatana is designed less around justice in an abstract sense and more around maintaining visible order, extracting value, and deterring disruption. Fines are scaled according to wealth and status. Confiscation of goods is common in commercial offenses. Forced labor is frequently used in place of imprisonment, particularly for those without political protection or financial means. Branding, public humiliation, and exile are employed in cases where a visible and lasting warning is considered necessary. Execution, while present, is reserved primarily for political offenses or symbolic displays of imperial authority rather than routine criminal punishment.

The most feared expression of imperial punishment is the public display of condemned individuals along the walls of Kart-Hadast. In these cases, prisoners are placed in iron cages suspended in exposed positions where death occurs slowly through exposure, thirst, and time. This method is not intended as a rapid means of execution but as a prolonged demonstration of consequence. Its purpose is not only to end life, but to ensure that the process of punishment itself becomes part of the city's visible landscape.

WEAPON AND ARMOR TRADE

Weapons and armor are tightly controlled within city limits but widely produced in specialized districts. Blacksmith guilds operate under licensing systems tied to noble patronage. This means that production is legal, but distribution is monitored.

A traveler seeking to buy weapons must typically present proof of need, which may include guild membership, military contract, noble sponsorship, or mercenary registration. Without such proof, purchases are restricted to low-grade equipment.

High-quality arms are rarely sold openly. They are exchanged through intermediaries, private contracts, or military channels. Armor is treated not as personal property but as an extension of sanctioned violence.

THE NOMADS

Nomadic groups in Ecabatana are not governed by centralized authority. Instead, they are organized through clan lineage and oath-bonds. Each major clan has elders who maintain law through tradition rather than codified statute. Disputes are resolved through negotiation, compensation, or ritualized combat depending on severity and cultural context. Nomads are generally independent from imperial or royal authority. They acknowledge external power only when it intersects with trade routes, water access, or military threat. Otherwise, they operate as sovereign groups within the open land.

Conflict between nomadic groups is common. Raids, livestock theft, and territorial disputes occur regularly. To outsiders, nomads appear fragmented. To themselves, they are networks of related but distinct peoples maintaining balance across a vast and shared landscape.

Some tribes are large enough to field hundreds of riders. Others are small family bands that survive by following the larger groups or attaching themselves to trade routes.

A tribe is led by a chieftain. That chieftain holds power through a mix of reputation and loyalty. Beneath them are family heads and war leaders who manage smaller portions of the tribe's people and animals.

A lone traveler may be ignored, guided, robbed, or taken in depending on circumstance. There is no single rule that governs this. What matters is whether the tribe is moving, whether it is in conflict, and whether the stranger brings value or risk. Caravans are treated differently. They are understood as economic objects. Nomads know what caravans are worth. They know when to trade and when to demand passage fees.

If a nomad accepts you under protection, that decision is taken seriously. Violating it is one of the few actions that reliably provokes unified retaliation across otherwise divided groups.

THE OBELISK DESERT

The Obelisk Desert was formed when the slaves of Axumar overthrew their Cymran masters. Its sands move like a restless sea, rising and falling in great waves. Anything heavy enough to sink is drawn beneath the surface and lost. Travel across the desert is done by specialized ships, built to ride the shifting dunes. Their hulls are reinforced, their sails wide, their crews experienced. Without them, crossing the desert is nearly impossible. Great obelisks rise from the sands, ancient and unmoving. Around them, merchants have built platform-cities, serving as outposts for trade with the east.

THE KINGDOMS OF AXUMAR

Beyond the eastern desert lie the Kingdoms of Axumar, a vast region of jungle and savannah. Herds of elephants, rhinoceroses, and other great beasts roam freely, drawing hunters from across the **Middle Sea**.

Several large kingdoms dominate the region, though none control it entirely. Trade routes pass through their territories, bringing wealth—and conflict.

Jagartha has begun seeking alliances there, hoping to hire large numbers of mercenaries to strengthen his rule.

ASSASSINATION AND INTRIGUE

In Ecabatana, assassination is an accepted extension of power. Among the nobility, rivalries are rarely settled openly. Wealth, land, and influence are too valuable to risk in direct conflict, and so disputes are carried out through quieter means. A poisoned cup at a feast, a trusted servant who changes allegiance, a caravan that never arrives, or a blade in a darkened corridor—these are the tools by which fortunes rise and fall.

Sultans and lesser nobles alike maintain networks of informants, spies, and hired killers. Some operate through intermediaries—guild agents, mercenary captains, or criminal brokers—while others cultivate loyal retainers trained specifically for such work.

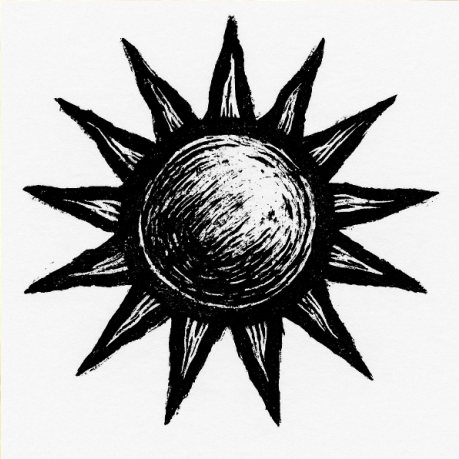
This constant undercurrent of intrigue shapes the behavior of the ruling class. Meals are tasted before they are eaten. Guards are rotated frequently. Trust is measured in usefulness rather than loyalty. Alliances shift quickly, and today's ally may already be planning tomorrow's betrayal.

PANTHEON

The dead of Ecabatana are often buried with ostrich egg shells, jewelry, and weapons. Nobles are often buried with slaves. Some Sultans are buried with their entire harems.

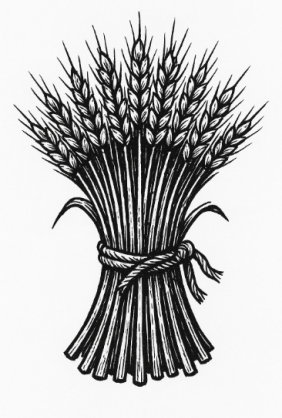
ASHDARTA, GOD OF THE SUN

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: The Sun
Father of the Ecabatanan gods



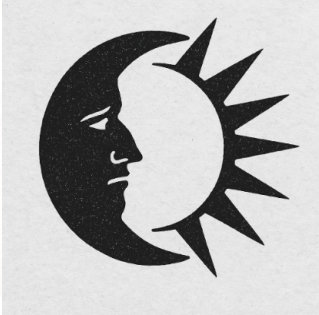
LA' BA, GOD OF LIFE

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Bundle of Wheat
Daughter of Ashdarta



DA' SHAHAR, GOD OF DUSK

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: The Moon
Patron of thieves, son of Ashdarta

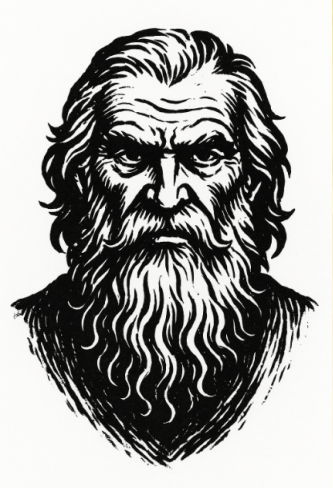


TANAVAT, GODDESS OF WAR

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Sword and shield
Wife and sister of Ashdarta, demands child sacrifices before battle

QARNAIM, GOD OF WISDOM AND MAGIC

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Bearded man
Brother of Ashdarta



DEGAMU, GOD OF FORESTS AND BEASTS

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Ram's head
Brother of Ashdarta

NERUDA, GODDESS OF STORMS

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Lightning bolt
Daughter of Ashdarta, patron of seafaring merchants and sailors

NPCS

KING JAGARTHA I : KING OF ECABATANA

6th-level human thief

Cunning, scheming, and ruthless, King Jagartha I came to the throne of Ecabatana through intrigue and murder. He is a master of manipulation and espionage, having spent a great deal of time in his youth consorting with the master thieves of the Kart-Hadast thieves' guilds. King Jagartha still employs a large number of thieves throughout his town and cities as his personal secret police, and his schemes and ambitions don't stop there. He realizes that the biggest threat to his dreams is the Republic of Karth... and plans have already been set in motion.

AC 9, **HD** 6 (23hp), **Att** 1 × *dagger +2* (1d4 + 2), **THACo** 17 (15 with *dagger +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P11 B14 S13, **STR** 11 **INT** 13 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 14 **CON** 10 **CHA** 15, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, javelin, sword, **Possessions** *dagger +2, scarab of protection*

QUEEN GLAPHYRA: QUEEN OF ECABATANA

4th-level human sorcerer

Born of Xelladran, Nethian, and Pharosian descent, Queen Glaphyra is the daughter of Pharosian nobility. She was given to Jagartha after he took over the throne, and he instantly realized in her he had an ally, in both body and ambition. Queen Glaphyra always has a number of schemes in the works for the benefit of herself and her husband, often employing itinerant adventurers for her plots.

AC 10, **HD** 4 (8hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 6 **INT** 13 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 11 **CON** 9 **CHA** 12, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, sling, **Spells** *burning hands, wall of fog, here not there, not this hour*, **Possessions** *potion of gaseous form*

PRINCESS CLELIA: PRINCESS OF ECABATANA HIGH COMMANDER OF THE ARMY

5th-level human knight

Princess Clelia is as tough as she is beautiful, refusing to entertain any suitor who can't best her in a duel (so far, none have come close). She is fiercely loyal to her parents, though she refuses to believe the darker rumors about her father.

AC 1, **HD** 5 (21hp), **Att** 1 × *bastard sword +1* (1d8 + 2), **THACo** 17 (15 with *bastard sword +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 11 **INT** 11 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 14 **CON** 12 **CHA** 16, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, javelin, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Bastard sword **Possessions** *bastard sword +1, breast plate +2*

ARDASHIR VEYAN: MONK

7th-level human monk

Ardashir Veyan is an Ecabatanan monk of disciplined temperament and quiet authority, trained in his youth by a wandering ascetic from the distant southern lands of Ka-Li. Blending Ecabatanan rigor with Ka-Lian contemplative practices, he founded a small but respected school in Kart-Hadast. There, he teaches breath control, mental stillness, and the refinement of perception, attracting students from minor noble houses and merchant families seeking clarity amid the city's constant political unrest.

AC 4, **HD** 7 (17hp), **Att** 2 × unarmed (1d10 + 2), **THACo** 17 (15 with unarmed attacks), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P11 B14 S13, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 17 **CON** 13 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, sword, two-handed sword

SHA'RAE: GUARDIAN NAGA

Sha'rae is a naga chieftain who rules an oasis deep within the eastern deserts. Her upper body is human in form, while her serpentine lower half coils through sun-warmed pools. She presides over her oasis as both sovereign and host, maintaining her power through generosity, ritual, and spectacle. Travelers, merchants, and exiles come seeking counsel or aid, and Sha'rae grants both only when amusement or curiosity moves her favor. Her feasts are legendary, and her judgment is never predictable.

Her camp has 1d10 × 10 dervishes at any one time.

AC 4, **HD** 11 (94hp), **Att** 1 × bite (1d6 + poison), 1 × constrict (2d4),**THACo** 11, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 7 (upper) 18 (lower) **INT** 18 **WIS** 20 **DEX** 10 **CON** 16 **CHA** 20, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral

▶**Poison**: Causes death in 1d4 turns (save versus poison)

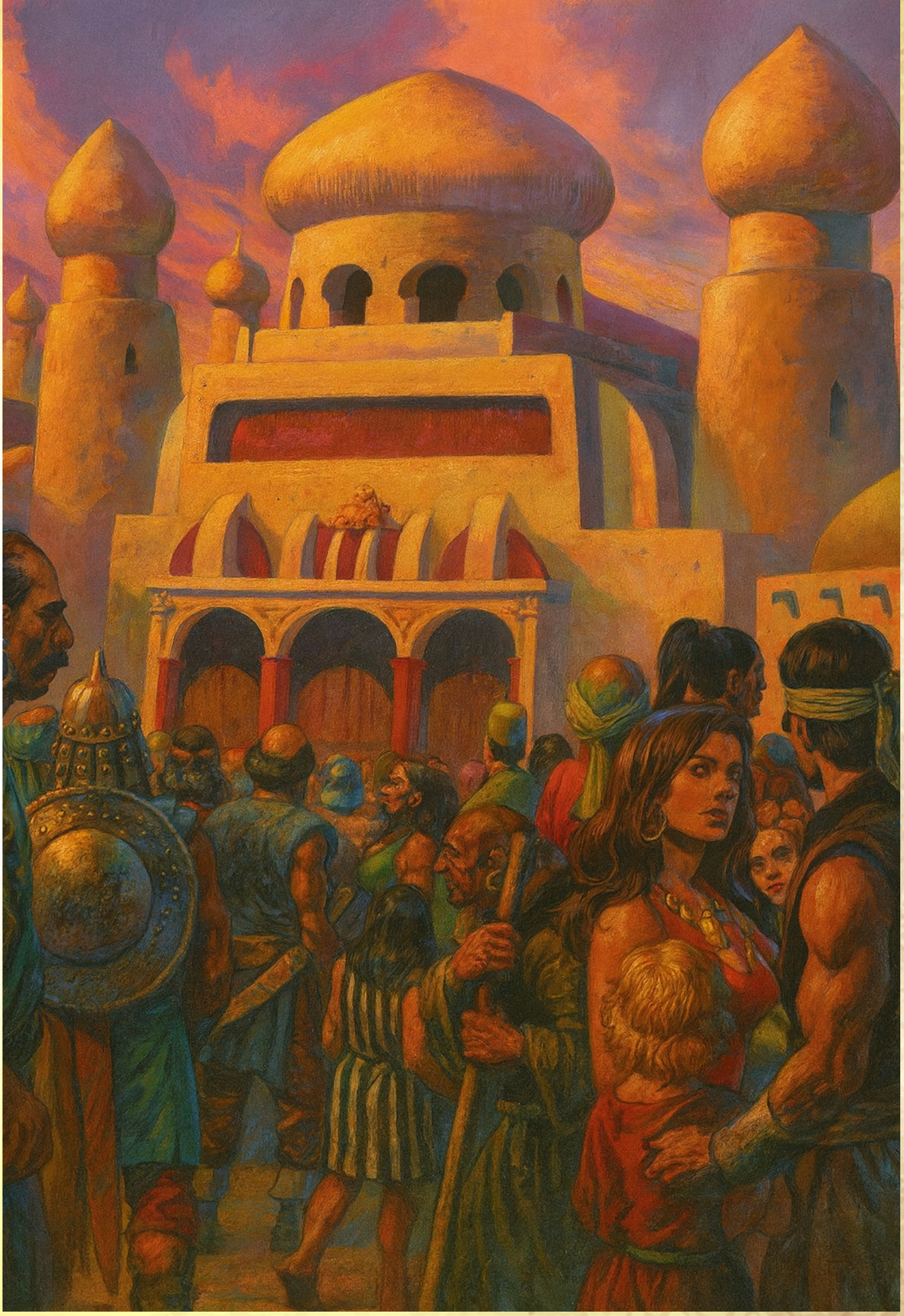
▶**Cleric spells**: *Cure light wounds*, *purify food and water*, *hold person*, *snake charm*, *remove curse*, *neutralize poison*

VESH: HEAD OF JAGARTHA'S SECRET POLICE (THE RAVEN COURT)

5th-level human thief

Vesh is responsible for the 500+ odd thieves and assassins who operate in the shadows of Ecabatana for the interest of Jagartha.

AC 5, **HD** 7 (17hp), **Att** 1 × *scimitar of shadows* (1d8 + 1), **THACo** 17 (16 with *scimitar of shadows*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P11 B14 S13, **STR** 12 **INT** 12 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 18 **CON** 11 **CHA** 10, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short sword, sword **Possessions** *Potion of poison, scimitar of shadows* (+1 to hit and damage, grants +10% to move silently and hide in shadows)



AGAMON: SULTAN OF KIRTSAN

7th-level human fighter

Born of an Ecabatanan mother and Xelladran father who claimed to be a bastard son of Lassandros the Conqueror, Agamon achieved his status as Sultan through the skill of his blade. His loyalty to Jagartha has never come into question, but Agamon believes in personal honor above all else, and if Jagartha ever tests that, he will find that Agamon makes a better ally than an enemy.

AC 8, **HD** 7 (31hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (1d8 + 2), **THACo** 14 (12 with scimitar), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B11 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 11 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 12 **CON** 14 **CHA** 14, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short bow, short sword, sword, two-handed sword **Weapon Specializations** Scimitar **Possessions** *Displacer cloak*

CYNDRA OF KART-HADAST: FAMED ADVENTURER

7th-level human fighter

Cyndra was born a slave in Kart-Hadast's famous pleasure markets, and sold to a vile Sultan whose town existed in the far eastern portion of the kingdom. After suffering terrible abuses at his hands, Cyndra slew him and escaped. Soon after, King Jagartha's usurpation of the throne began, and Cyndra turned to banditry during the chaos. After the brief war, Cyndra joined a mercenary band of disenfranchised soldiers, and fought in campaigns in Lusatania, Pharos, and even far away Mauretania. She returned to the lands of her birth only five short years ago, and has made quite a name for herself as a blademaster, offering her services from everything from bodyguard to treasure hunter to guide into the harsh fareastern jungles.

AC 3, **HD** 7 (25hp), **Att** 1 × *scimitar +1* (1d8 + 2), **THACo** 14 (12 with *scimitar +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B11 S12, **STR** 11 **INT** 10 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 14 **CON** 9 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short sword, spear, sword, two-handed sword **Weapon Specializations** Scimitar **Possessions** *Scale armor +1, scimitar +1 (flaming)*

ZAHIR QUASRAM: NOMAD CHIEF

6th-level human ranger

Zahir Qasram is the war-chief of the Kharadi, one of the largest and most feared nomadic tribes of the eastern sands. Known for his discipline and patience, he commands loyalty through strength and measured judgment rather than spectacle. His riders move swiftly across the desert, guarding trade routes, raiding rivals, and enforcing ancient claims to water and pasture. Though he treats outsiders with caution, those who earn his respect find him a steadfast and formidable ally.

AC 10, **HD** 6 (25hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (2d8 + 4), **THACo** 12 (11 with scimitar), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 14* **INT** 10 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 11 **CON** 15 **CHA** 15, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, short sword, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Scimitar **Possessions** *Bracers of giant strength (as girdle)*
**14 is his natural STR*

MALIK SAHIR: NOMAD CHIEF

6th-level human fighter

Malik Sahir, known as the White Chief, leads the Banu Qadim across the deep desert, his riders clad in pale robes that vanish into heat and glare. He rules through charisma and quiet intensity, favoring cunning over open battle. Rumor claims he was once the lover of Sha'rae of the Shifting Spring, a bond that ended without peace. Since then, his dealings with her oasis are careful and distant.

AC 6, **HD** 6 (31hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (1d8 + 2), **THACo** 17 (15 with scimitar), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 13 **INT** 11 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 16 **CON** 13 **CHA** 17, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short sword, spear, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Scimitar **Possessions** *Ring of djinni summoning*

VASHIR: AASSASSIN

5th-level human assassin

Vashir is a professional assassin known in Ecabatana's courts and markets as a man who completes what he is paid to do. He favors patience over speed, often spending weeks observing a target before striking. Poison, misdirection, and timing are his preferred tools. He avoids unnecessary violence and leaves little trace behind, but certainly isn't a stranger to it. Those who hire him understand that once a contract is accepted, it will be carried out without hesitation or reconsideration.

AC 6, **HD** 5 (11hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6), **THACo** 17, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P11 B14 S13, **STR** 11 **INT** 14 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 16 **CON** 12 **CHA** 8, **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short sword, sword

DARAMIR: MERCHANT PRINCE

Daramir is a prominent merchant of Ecabatana whose caravans run regularly between Kirtsan, Kart-Hadast, and the desert trade routes beyond. He deals in spices, dyed textiles, and rare imports from the south, maintaining strong ties with both nomadic clans and coastal guilds. He often utilizes the services of adventurers.

For Daramir, uses merchant stats.

ZARGHA THE RED SAND: NOMAD CHIEF

8th-level half-orc barbarian

Zargha the Red Sand is a half-orc warlord who leads the Kharzugan, a brutal desert tribe of orcs, humans, and half-orcs of nearlly 200 warriors. Forged through constant raiding, the Kharzugan strike caravans, seize goods, and have been known to sack entire caravanserais. Zargha rules through strength and shared plunder, rewarding loyalty and crushing dissent. Her warbands move fast and hit hard, leaving little behind but smoke, bones, and stories whispered along every trade road.

AC 5, **HD** 8 (25hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6 + 3), **THACo** 14 (12 with short sword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W9 P8 B10 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 10 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 13 **CON** 18 **CHA** 13, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, short sword, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Short sword **Possessions** *Leather armor +1*

LYSARA VENN: WEREWOLF

Lysara Venn travels the trade roads as a quiet, unassuming woman, often attaching herself to caravans under the guise of needing protection. She is polite and reserved. She reveals her true nature after they have settled for the night... that of a werewolf. Caravans are found torn apart by morning, mounts devoured, goods missing. Few survivors connect the soft-spoken traveler to the slaughter left behind.

Use the stats of a werewolf.

NALARA & VEYSI KORRIN

3rd-level human acrobats / 2nd-level thieves

Nalara and Veysi Korrin are acrobat sisters who travel with a well-known circus across Ecabatana, dazzling crowds with daring climbs, silks, and impossible balance. By night, they turn those same skills to burglary. Nalara is bold and quick to act, while Veysi plans each job with care. Together, they leave little trace beyond missing valuables and unanswered questions.

AC 8, **HD** 5 (16hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 9 **INT** 10 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 13 **CON** 14 **CHA** 16, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, short sword

VASHRAKAR INDRAVAEL: RAKSHASA

Vashrakar Indravael is a rakshasa who dwells in Kart-Hadast beneath the guise of an elven merchant prince. Refined, soft-spoken, and endlessly patient, he has built a vast fortune through trade, manipulation, and quiet coercion. His estate is a fortress of luxury, guarded by loyal soldiers and subtle enchantments that conceal far more than they reveal. Within its halls, he hoards rare magical relics, each acquired through bargains, theft, or ruin, all in service of ambitions known only to him.

Use stats of a rakshasas.

UNITS

King Jagartha's army is 29,800 fighters strong, as outlined below.

LIGHT INFANTRY (×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (broadsword), 1d8 (mace)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Broadsword vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

MEDIUM INFANTRY (×45)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100
HD: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (broadsword), 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen, Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)
Broadsword vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

SLINGER (×45)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (sling)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

DEFENSIVE SPEAR (×66)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (sling)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

LIGHT CAVALRY (×15)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 80' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen & Light Large (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

CAMELRY (×12)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 4
TOTAL HD: 400
MV: 50' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

WAR ELEPHANTS (×5)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 (elephant count; each with 2 soldiers) **HD**: 11 (per elephant plus 2 riders)
TOTAL HD: 1,100
MV: 50' **DAMAGE**: Short bow × 2 (1d6), trample 4d8
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Heavy Large
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Short bow
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged attack & Heavy Large(see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

SAND SORCERERS (×1)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 200
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: Dagger (1d4)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmishers
ABILITIES: Spellcasters (two 1st-level spells)
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
NA

DIRE RHINOS (×5)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 10
TOTAL HD: 1,000
MV: 40' **DAMAGE**: Polearm (1d10), trample 2d12
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Heavy Large
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Heavy Large
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Heavy Large (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

The Kingdoms of Axumar

Capital: Kashtara
Demographics: 78% human, 8% halfling, 5% elf, 3% half-elf, 2% dwarf, 2% dragonborn, 2% other
Notable Settlements: Kashtara (80,000 families; Market Value II), Zambesh (45,000 families; Market Value III), Kandorai (40,000 families; Market Value III), Makorosh (35,000 families; Market Value III)
Population: 5.8 million people (across the major kingdoms and settled regions)
Government: Multiple monarchies (loosely aligned cultural sphere)
Rulers: High King Orun of House Varesh-Kasht, Obelisk-Bound Sovereign of Kashtara and nominal High King of Axumar (dominant savanna power); alongside Queen Selyana Varesh of Makorosh, the River Crown of the delta cities; King Brakhan Dhor of Kandorai, the Iron Thorn King of the highland clans; and Queen Asha-Toril Vey of Zambesh, the Caravan Queen who governs the trade routes linking jungle, savanna, and Obelisk Desert crossings.
Annual Treasury: 720,000 pp (combined major kingdoms; Kashta controls the majority)
Expenses: 600,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Ivory, rare hardwoods, gold, gemstones, echanted relics, incense, medicinal herbs, exotic animals, worked bone, ritual masks, dyed textiles
Demand Values: Alum -2, amber +1, dyes -2, exotic hides -2, fish +1, glasswares +2, grain -1, hides -2, horses +2, iron +2, ivory -3, lead +1, lumber -3, luxury goods +1, olive oil +2, rugs +1, spices -2, wine +2, wool +1
Beasts of Peril: camels, displacer beast, jungle hydra, giant scarabs, desert dragon turtle, dust mephit, sand wraith, earth elemental, carnivorous ape, giant crocodile, titan, naga, werejaguar, lamia, lion, manticore, rhinoceros, woolly rhinoceros, giant scorpion, scorpionmen

Far to the east of the **Middle Sea** lie the lands of Axumar, a vast and ancient region divided by jungle, desert, and savanna. Today, it is known as a place of powerful kingdoms, deep-rooted traditions, and refined magical practice. It was not always so.

Long before the rise of the present kingdoms, Axumar was a land of free peoples. Dozens of tribes lived across its jungles and open plains, bound by kinship and land. The region was rich in mana, its ley lines running thick beneath the earth, surfacing in sacred groves, and river valleys that hummed with latent power. Magic was not formalized, but it was understood—woven into ritual, ancestry, and the rhythms of the natural world. This changed with the coming of Cymra.

Cymra was an island nation to the west, a civilization of powerful mages whose mastery of structured arcane practice far surpassed anything known in Axumar at the time. Drawn by the abundance of ley lines, Cymran fleets crossed the sea and made landfall and crossed the jungles. Conquest followed.

The tribes of Axumar were not prepared for organized magical warfare. Cymran spellcraft reshaped battlefields, shattered defenses, and bent nature itself to their will. One by one, the tribes were subdued. Those who resisted were destroyed. Those who survived were enslaved.

For generations, the people of Axumar lived under Cymran rule. They were forced to labor in the harvesting of magical resources and the construction of arcane structures. Entire populations were relocated to serve the needs of their masters. Yet in this oppression lay the seeds of Cymra's defeat.

The Cymrans did not hide their magic—they depended on it too completely to do so. Their rituals, their language of power, their methods of shaping energy were performed openly, often in the presence of slaves who were assumed incapable of understanding them. This assumption proved fatal. Over time, the enslaved peoples of Axumar began to learn.

Some learned by observation. Others were taught in secret by sympathetic Cymrans who opposed the system from within.

The rebellion, when it came, was a coordinated uprising. Across the jungles, in hidden enclaves and labor camps, the people of Axumar rose together. Cymran outposts were overwhelmed. Supply lines were severed. The Cymrans were driven out, their strongholds destroyed, their presence in Axumar erased.

But the people of Axumar did not stop there. Fearing that another such invasion could come again from the west, the newly freed peoples undertook a monumental act of magic. Drawing upon the ley lines that had once been exploited against them, they erected a series of massive obelisks along the western jungle frontier.

Through a vast and coordinated ritual, the obelisks reshaped the land itself. The dense jungle that once bordered the **Middle Sea** was stripped away and remade into a hostile expanse—the Obelisk Desert. Its sands do not lie still, but move like waves upon an ocean, rising and falling in slow, consuming tides. Anything heavy enough to sink is drawn beneath its surface and lost. Travel across it is possible only through specially constructed vessels that can ride the shifting dunes as though they were water.

On the eastern side of the Obelisk Desert, the jungle continues—vast, dense, and alive with both natural and magical presence. Here, the descendants of the original tribes still dwell. Some have formed larger polities, including the Rafdar, the Cusha, the Nashek, the Elenabwe, and the Kahla. Each maintains its own customs, leadership structures, and relationship with magic. Some are isolationist, others trade cautiously with the outside world, but all retain a strong connection to the land and to ancestral tradition.

Beyond these are countless smaller tribes, among them the Makoro, Bantari, Kaseba, Namburu, Sakora, Tembara, Zaniko, Baloro, Kandari, and Nesuma. These groups are more fluid in structure, often moving through the jungle in response to seasonal change, spiritual guidance, or external pressure.

Magic in the jungle is not formalized into schools or institutions. It is practiced through ritual, lineage, and direct interaction with the world. Spirits, ancestors, and unseen forces are treated as part of daily life.

Beyond the jungle lies the open savanna, where the most powerful and structured civilizations of Axumar have risen. These kingdoms represent the evolution of Axumaran society after the fall of Cymra. While they retain deep cultural ties to their origins, they have developed cities, agriculture, standing armies, and advanced magical disciplines.

There are four major kingdoms:

- ▶Kashtara, the most powerful and influential
- ▶Zambesh
- ▶Kandorai
- ▶Makorosh

These states are sophisticated in both governance and arcane practice. Magic is studied, refined, and integrated into warfare, infrastructure, and leadership. Unlike the jungle tribes, their use of magic is formalized, though it remains distinct from the rigid systems once used by Cymra.

Though they differ in many ways, one law unites all of Axumar, from jungle tribe to savanna kingdom:

Slavery is forbidden.

This is a foundational cultural truth born from shared history. The memory of Cymran rule remains strong, passed down through generations.

TRIBAL LANDS

The deep jungle regions of Axumar lie just beyond the Obelisk Desert, acting as a second natural barrier before travelers reach the savanna kingdoms. Here, civilization never fully consolidated after the fall of Cymra. These lands are a living mosaic of tribes and kin-bonds.

SOCIETY AND AUTHORITY

Authority in the jungle is rarely centralized. Power is earned through a combination of lineage, spiritual recognition, and demonstrated survival wisdom. Most tribes are organized around three overlapping structures.

The first is the bloodline circle, usually a matrilineal or elder-weighted family line that maintains continuity of leadership. The second is the war-leader or spear-chief, chosen by reputation, not inheritance, and often replaced after raids, hunts, or failures. The third is the spirit authority, typically a shaman, oracle, or beast-talker who interprets omens, mana flow, and ancestral voices tied to the land itself.

Decisions are made in council, but councils are not equal. A respected shaman can override a war-chief. A war-chief can depose a weak bloodline head. A bloodline elder can exile both if supported by enough kin. Authority is therefore not a ladder, but a constantly negotiated balance of force, belief, and survival credibility.

FOOD AND SURVIVAL

The jungle provides abundance, but not stability. Diet varies widely by region, but most tribes rely on a combination of hunted meat, river fish, foraged roots, fermented fruits, and mana-fertilized plants that grow only near ley lines.

Large communal hunts are central to social cohesion. Killing a jungle beast is never

purely practical; it is a ritualized act that reinforces status. Nothing large is wasted. Bone becomes tools, sinew becomes binding cord, hides become shelter, and certain organs are reserved for shamans or chiefs believed to absorb spiritual strength.

Some deeper tribes practice controlled cultivation of predatory plants and symbiotic fungal gardens that respond to spoken cadence or blood offerings, a practice outsiders often mistake for cannibalism until they understand the ecology.

JUNGLE DANGERS

The jungles of Axumar is a layered ecosystem saturated with ancient mana scars from Cymran experimentation and later Axumaran rebalancing. Entire regions behave unpredictably. Travelers speak of paths that shift location, rivers that change course overnight, and groves where sound behaves incorrectly. Certain zones are permanently inhabited by apex magical predators that do not migrate because they do not need to. Others are “silent zones” where magic fails entirely and survival becomes purely physical.

The deeper one goes, the less the jungle feels like terrain and more like an intelligence that is watching, remembering, and occasionally correcting intrusions.

THE LIZARD KINGDOM OF VOR-KHET

Along the southern wetlands and flooded basin jungles lies the scaled dominion of Vor-Khet, a structured civilization of lizardfolk that rivals human tribal organization in complexity. Unlike scattered jungle tribes, Vor-Khet is centralized under a priest-kingship system ruled by interpreted ancestral memory embedded in submerged temple-cities.

OUTSIDERS

A lone traveler may be treated as a curiosity, a potential omen, or a threat depending on how they enter the jungle and what they carry. Merchant caravans from Zambesh or Kandorai are often tolerated if they follow known river routes and bring offerings that acknowledge tribal sovereignty.

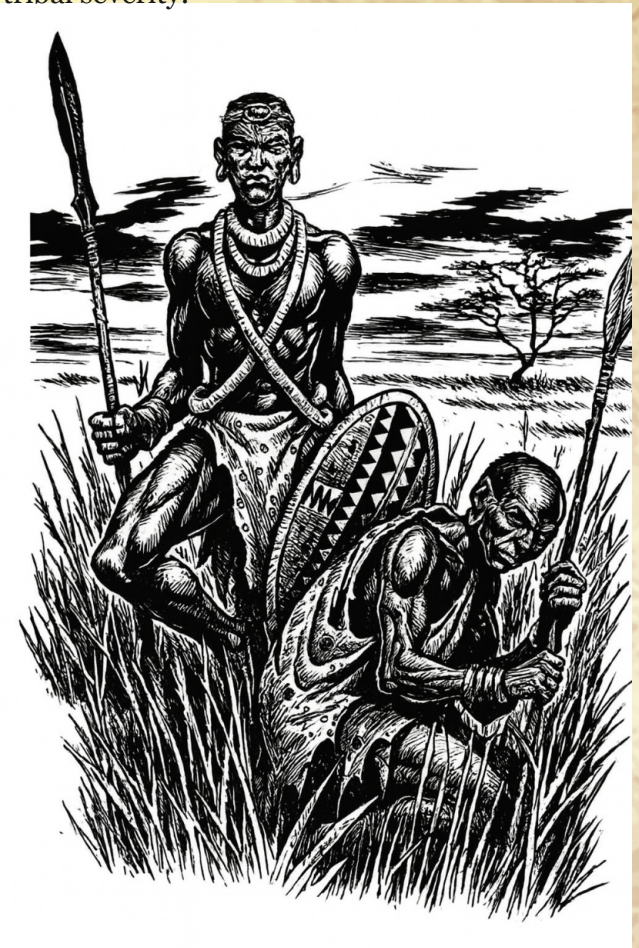
However, any outsider who arrives unannounced, especially through ley-line corridors or Obelisk Desert crossings, is assumed to be either lost, dangerous, or lying about their intent until proven otherwise.

Many tribes maintain no inns in the conventional sense. Instead, there are guest-fire clearings, temporary hospitality sites where strangers may sleep under watch. Shelter is offered through kin-houses, communal long huts, or suspended canopy platforms, but always under implicit conditions of behavior and contribution. Refusal to accept hospitality is seen as hostile intent.

LAW AND PUNISHMENT

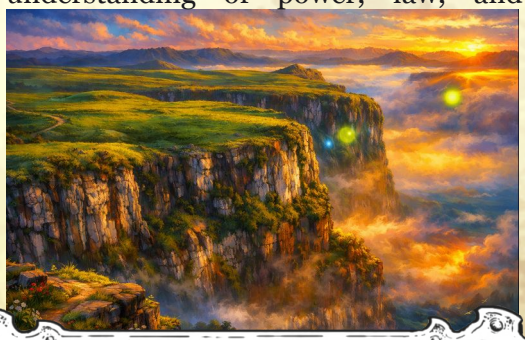
Law is immediate and situational rather than codified. The most common principle is reciprocity: harm given is harm returned in a form that restores balance rather than escalates it unnecessarily.

Minor violations such as theft, disrespect of sacred sites, or breaking guest-law result in restitution, labor, or ritual penance. More serious offenses, particularly violations involving spirit sites or betrayal of guest-right, are punished through exile or ritual execution depending on tribal severity.



THE SAVANNA KINGDOMS

Beyond the jungles, where the land opens into wide grasslands broken by rivers, stone ridges, and scattered forests, lie the great savanna kingdoms of Axumar. These realms represent the most structured and outward-facing societies of the region. They are not unified, but they share a common origin in the post-Cymran age, and a shared understanding of power, law, and survival.



The four major kingdoms—Kashtara, Zambesh, Kandorai, and Makorosh—each acknowledges the others as legitimate powers. Each competes. Each prepares for war, even in times of peace.

CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

Across the savanna kingdoms, certain elements remain consistent. Slavery is forbidden in all forms. This is not debated, negotiated, or ignored. It is enforced absolutely, and violations are met with immediate and often lethal response.

Magic is respected and studied, but not casually practiced. Unlike the jungle tribes, where magic is woven into daily life, the savanna kingdoms formalize it. Court magi, ritualists, and trained practitioners operate within defined roles. Unauthorized or reckless use of magic—especially near ley-line sites—is treated as a serious offense.

Wealth is visible. Status is displayed through textiles, jewelry, mounts, attendants, and architecture. A noble is expected to look like a noble. A merchant is expected to show success. Appearances are more than simple vanity—they are proof of position.

Hospitality exists, but it is structured. Inns and guest houses are common along major trade routes and within cities. A traveler can expect to pay for lodging, stable their mounts, and be provided with food and water. Service is direct and transactional. You speak to the proprietor or their staff, state your needs, and pay accordingly. Wealthier establishments offer private rooms, guards, and discretion. Poorer ones offer little more than a mat, a shared fire, and a place to tie your animal.

LAW AND ORDER

Law in the savanna kingdoms is organized, visible, and enforced. Each city maintains a standing guard force. These guards patrol markets, gates, and major streets. They are equipped, trained, and accountable to local authority—usually the ruling noble or a royal magistrate.

Laws are not identical across kingdoms, but they follow similar principles: protection of trade, preservation of order, and maintenance of hierarchy.

If a player character breaks the law, the response is immediate. Minor offenses—public disorder, unpaid debts, small theft—result in fines, confiscation of goods, or short-term detention. Guards will intervene directly, and the matter may be settled on the spot if coin is available.

More serious crimes—violent theft, assault, illegal magic use, or interference with trade—lead to arrest. The accused is brought before a magistrate or local authority. These hearings are swift. Evidence is practical, not philosophical. Witnesses, physical proof, and status all influence the outcome.

Punishments vary by severity and usefulness of the offender. Labor, heavy fines, branding, or exile are common. Execution is reserved for extreme cases, particularly crimes that threaten stability or violate the anti-slavery laws.

Foreigners are judged more harshly if they disrupt order, but they are also more likely to be fined or expelled rather than executed, especially if they are seen as valuable.

THE KINGDOMS

KASHTARA

The dominant power of the savanna, Kashtara is

the largest, wealthiest, and most politically influential of the four kingdoms.
Its capital, Kashtara, is a massive city of stone, gold accents, and elevated districts built along converging ley lines. The High King rules from here, supported by a court of nobles, magi, and military commanders. Authority is centralized, and the kingdom maintains the largest standing army in Axumar.

Kashtara sees itself as the stabilizing force of the region. Its laws are strict, its administration efficient, and its ambitions clear. It does not seek constant war, but it prepares for it at all times.

ZAMBESH

Zambesh is the kingdom of trade. Positioned along the routes that connect jungle resources, savanna production, and Obelisk Desert crossings, it thrives on movement—of goods, people, and information. Its cities are dense with merchants, brokers, caravans, and foreign influence.

Queen Asha-Toril Vey rules through control of these routes. Wealth flows through Zambesh, and with it, power. Laws here favor commerce. Contracts are enforced aggressively, and interference with trade is punished harshly. Zambesh is less rigid socially than Kashtara, but more volatile. Alliances shift quickly, and influence can be bought, lost, or stolen within a single season.

KANDORAI

Kandorai rises from the highlands and broken terrain at the edge of the savanna.

Its people are known for discipline, endurance, and a strong martial tradition. Power is tied closely to military strength, and King Brakhan Dhor maintains control through loyalty of his warriors and enforcement of strict codes of conduct. Cities in Kandorai are fortified and practical.

Life is harsher here. Resources are harder won, and respect is earned through action rather than display. Law is direct. Crimes are punished quickly, often publicly, and without extended deliberation. Kandorai does not tolerate weakness in leadership or disorder among its people.

MAKOROSH

Makorosh is built along rivers and fertile deltas, making it one of the most agriculturally productive regions in Axumar.

Its wealth comes from water. Crops, river trade, and control of fertile land define its power. Queen Selyana Varesh governs through a network of river cities and agricultural estates, supported by both military force and economic control.

Makorosh blends structure with fluidity. Its laws are organized, but its culture is less rigid than Kashtara's. Diplomacy plays a larger role here, and influence is often exercised through negotiation rather than force.

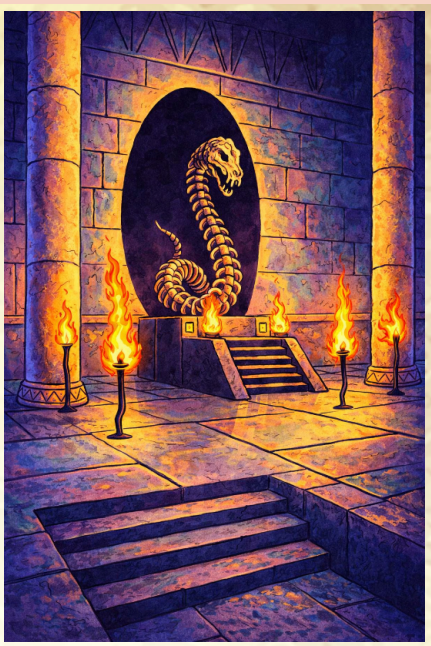
Its cities are vibrant, filled with markets, temples, and waterways that serve as both roads and defenses.

PANTHEON

The peoples of Axumar worship a living host of gods, spirits, and ancestral powers tied to land, lineage, and memory. In the savanna kingdoms these forces are formalized into temples and priesthoods, while in the jungle they are encountered directly, spoken to, and sometimes feared as much as they are revered.

DOMBALLAH

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: None (secret society)
Set, as known to the Axumarans



Domballah is not openly worshiped in Axumar. His name survives only within a hidden sect that operates beyond the authority of kings, temples, and tribal spirits. To most, he is unknown. To those who know of him, he is not spoken of lightly. The sect teaches that Domballah is the true form of a far older god—known in forgotten ages as Set—who once walked the world during the Age of the Titans. In that time, he took mortal shape and ruled through fear, cunning, and dominion over hidden things. He was eventually cast down and imprisoned in the Abyss, where he remains. Deep within a concealed sanctuary, they guard the preserved bones of Set's last mortal avatar. Through these bones, the High Priest of Domballah is said to speak directly with the imprisoned god. The communication is not constant. It requires preparation, sacrifice, and alignment with specific celestial and ley-line conditions. When it occurs, it is described as overwhelming—visions, whispers, and commands delivered through layered sensation rather than simple speech. Those who have witnessed such rituals rarely remain unchanged.

ZAHURAK

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Lion's head
King of the gods, embodiment of divine rulership and solar authority. Said to sit upon a golden throne atop a mountain that touches the heavens. Patron of emperors and law givers.

MAKEDA-NARI, QUEEN OF RIVERS AND BLOODLINES

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Flowing river
Goddess of fertility, lineage, and sacred dynasties. Midwives and queens alike invoke her. Her waters are said to carry the memories of ancestors.

KHEPRAZU, THE VEILED SERPENT OF SECRETS

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Coiled serpent
Keeper of hidden knowledge, forbidden magic, and lost names. Lieutenant of Set. Worshiped in secret by sorcerers, spies, and those who seek power beyond the Lawful gods' blessings.

DURGASH, THE RED SPEAR OF THE WASTES

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Bloodied spear
War, tempest. God of conquests, storms, and burning winds. Said to ride across the desert in a storm of ash and lightning.

ABAL-KOR, KEEPER OF BONES AND THE SILENT PATH

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Skull mask
Guardian of the dead and guide of souls into the ancenstral realms. Priests wear bone masks.

NPCS

HIGHT KING ORUN OF HOUSE VARESH-KASHT : OBELISK-BOUND SOVERIGN OF KASHTARA AND NOMINAL HIGH KING OF AXUMAR

High King Orun rules from a court built atop converging ley lines. In his later years, he undertook the Obelisk Rite, binding his spirit in part to the ancient wards that shield Axumar's western frontier. He governs with patience and long vision, favoring stability over conquest, though his authority is constantly tested by rival kingdoms and shifting alliances. Use noble for stats with 2 extra HD.

PRINCE JORATH VARESH-KASHT

Prince Jorath Varesh-Kasht is the only son of High King Orun and heir to the throne of Kashtara. In his early thirties, he is known for his sharp mind and restless ambition, favoring decisive action where his father shows restraint. He has spent years among generals, merchants, and court magi, learning the levers of power firsthand. Many see in him a future of expansion and change, though whether that brings strength or instability remains uncertain. Use noble for stats.

TAREK ZAHUR-MAL: CHAMPION OF KASHTARA

8th-level human paladin

Tarek Zahur-Mal is the foremost champion of Kashtara and a sworn paladin of Zahurak, the Lion God of judgment and kingship. Clad in full plate with the motif of a lion, he serves as both battlefield commander and living symbol of divine authority. Tarek is unwavering in his sense of justice, feared by enemies and respected by allies. He is often called upon when law fails and judgment must be carried out without hesitation.

AC 0, **HD** 8 (35hp), **Att** 1 × battle axe (1d8 + 2), **THACo** 14 (12 with battle axe), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 15 **INT** 11 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 12 **CON** 15 **CHA** 16, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, short bow, short sword, spear, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Battle axe **Possessions** *Full plate +2*

THE SOUL EATER

The soul eater, known to some as the Pod-Sire, is a Horror left behind when Cymra tore open the Outer Dark. It dwells in a blighted stretch of jungle where trees grow twisted and hollow, their trunks swollen with pale, breathing pods. It hunts by night, stealing the souls of the living and seeding them into these growths. Each pod matures into a lesser version of the creature, bound to its will. If the Pod-Sire is destroyed, its essence flees into one of the pods, reforming over 2d4 weeks. Killing it requires burning the grove to ash.

AC 7, **HD** 12** (54hp), **Att** 1 × bite (2d6), **THAC0** 10 (15 with scimitar), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 2,700

▶**Grab**: Victim requires a STR check. If failed, restrained by the soul eater.

▶**Damage immunity**: Unharmed by non-magical weapons.

▶**Soul eating**: Can only be used by opponents who are successfull grabbed. The victim must save versus death or have their soul taken. In the soul eater's grove, a pod containing the soul begins to grow. The victim falls into an immediate coma that cannot be broken unless the pod is found and destroyed. If the pod is not destroyed before the next full moon, the soul is forever lost, and the victim dies.

KAELIRA

3rd-level human ranger

Kaelira is a former tribeswoman of Axumar's deep jungles who broke tradition through an uncharacteristic hunger for exploration. Leaving her kinlands behind, she traveled into the savanna kingdoms, where she discovered a talent for reading terrain, spoor, and ley-line disturbances with uncanny precision. Now she offers her services as a tracker and guide, moving between caravans and border towns. Though pragmatic and composed, she remains deeply tied to the rhythms of the jungle she left behind.

AC 7, **HD** 3 (15hp), **Att** 1 × short bow (1d6 + 1), **THAC0** 19 (16 with short bow), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 11 **INT** 11 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 16 **CON** 11 **CHA** 9, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, spear, **Weapon Specializations** Short bow

Below are the personalities of several tribal chieftains. They each use the following stat block:

AC 8, **HD** 5 (25hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6 + 2), **THAC0** 17 (15 with spear), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W11 P10 B13 S13, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 16 **CON** 13 **CHA** 13, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, spear, sword, **Weapon Specializations** Spear

CHIEF KOMBARI

5th-level human barbarian

Kombari leads the Rafdar through dense interior jungle, where few outsiders survive without guidance. Broad-shouldered and deliberate, he values patience over aggression, preferring to outmaneuver enemies rather than meet them head-on. He is known for maintaining strict control over sacred ley-line territories and punishing trespassers without warning. Under his rule, the Rafdar have remained stable, insular, and difficult to influence.

CHIEF OLUMEKA

5th-level human barbarian

Olumeka is a sharp-minded leader who guides the Cusha along river systems and trade-adjacent jungle corridors. He is more open to controlled contact with outsiders than most chiefs, allowing limited exchange under strict terms. His people are skilled fishers and canoe fighters, striking quickly and vanishing into waterways. Olumeka balances diplomacy and force carefully, ensuring the Cusha benefit without becoming dependent.

CHIEF ZUBERI

5th-level human barbarian

Zuberi rules the Nashek, a warlike tribe known for aggressive expansion and ritual combat. Scarred from decades of battle, he leads from the front and demands strength from all under him. The Nashek frequently clash with neighboring tribes and test borders with Kandari scouts. Zuberi respects only power and survival, and his leadership has made the Nashek feared but unstable.

CHIEF TENDAJI

5th-level human barbarian

Tendaji is a quiet and deeply spiritual leader of the Elenabwe, a tribe closely tied to ancient groves and spirit paths. He rarely leaves sacred territory, instead guiding his people through visions and ritual.

Outsiders who approach respectfully may be allowed passage, but never without oversight. His authority comes from spiritual legitimacy rather than force, and his people follow him without question.

CHIEF JABARI

5th-level human barbarian

Jabari commands the Kahla, a mobile tribe that ranges between jungle edge and open grassland. Known for adaptability, the Kahla shift camps frequently and avoid prolonged conflict. Barun is practical and direct, willing to negotiate or fight depending on circumstance. His tribe often serves as intermediaries between jungle tribes and savanna traders, though trust is always conditional.

SAMIRA KESHANI

Samira Keshani rose from poverty in the outskirts of Zambesh to become one of the most powerful merchant magnates in Axumar. Through relentless ambition, calculated risk, and an instinct for opportunity, she built a vast trade network spanning the savanna kingdoms, the Obelisk routes, and ports of the Middle Sea. Her caravans and ships move openly, but her true strength lies in her web of informants. Samira trades in goods, secrets, and influence with equal precision. Use the merchant stats.

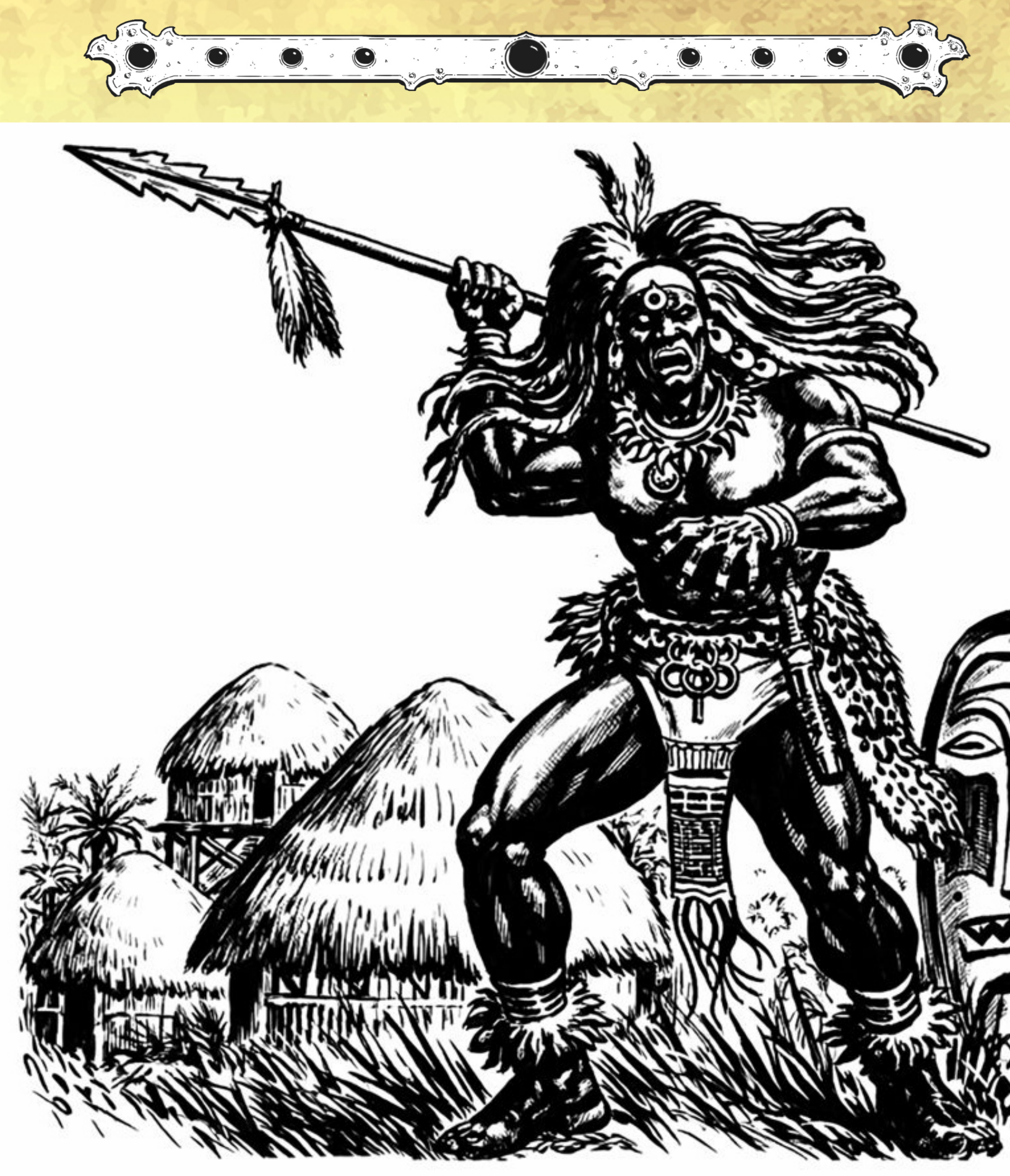
KOFARI

4th-level human barbarian

Kofari N'bata is a renowned hunter and warrior of the deep jungle tribes of Axumar, known for his speed, precision, and relentless focus.

He wields a rare double-bladed short sword, striking in fluid, circular motions that mirror the hunting patterns of jungle predators.

Kofari tracks both beast and man with equal skill, often serving as his tribe's first line of defense against intruders. He speaks little, but his actions carry weight among his people.



AC 6, **HD** 4 (18hp), **Att** 2 × short sword (1d6 + 2), **THACo** 17 (15 with short sword, or 17/19 with double attack), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W11 P10 B13 S13, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 15 **CON** 12 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, short sword, spear, **Weapon Specializations** Short sword

NABIRA TESHANI

4th-level human beast master

Nabira Teshani serves the court of Zambesh as a master of beasts, renowned for her ability to tame and train even the most dangerous animals of the savanna and jungle. Lions, great cats, and scaled guardians stand watch over palaces and noble estates under her guidance. She treats each creature with ritual respect, believing the bond between handler and beast to be sacred. In Zambesh, to be chosen by Nabira is considered an honor—for animal and master alike.

AC 8, **HD** 4 (14hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P12 B15 S16, **STR** 9 **INT** 10 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 15, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short sword, spear

VERYU N'ZAKAR

4th-level human cleric / 4th-level necromancer

Veyru N'Zakar is the hidden High Priest of Domballah in Axumar, operating behind layers of false identities and loyal intermediaries. He guards the sacred bones of the god's mortal avatar and communes with Domballah through forbidden rites. Patient and calculating, Veyru seeks not chaos, but dominion—working to restore his god to power and place all peoples under its rule. Few know his name, but his influence moves quietly through courts, cults, and shadows.

AC 9, **HD** 8 (22hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P14 B16 S15, **STR** 11 **INT** 17 **WIS** 18 **DEX** 10 **CON** 9 **CHA** 14, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, staff, **Possessions** *Ring of protection*, **Spells** *chill touch, undead servitor, bone armor, skeletal steed, cause light wounds, cause fear, snake charm*

QUEEN ASHA-TORIL VEY: RULER OF ZAMBESH

Queen Asha-Toril Vey rules Zambesh as the Caravan Queen, controlling the vital trade routes linking jungle, savanna, and the Obelisk Desert. Born into a minor noble house, she secured power through calculated alliances and absolute command of commerce. Under her reign, Zambesh has grown wealthy and indispensable. She governs through contracts, spies, and swift reprisals, ensuring that every road, caravan, and bargain ultimately answers to her will. Use noble for stats.

ILARO N'VASHI: RANGER

4th-level elf ranger cleric

Ilaro N'Vashiis a jungle-born elf ranger of the Bantari tribe, known for his silent movement and deadly precision with the bow. He serves as a pathfinder and watcher for his people, ranging far beyond tribal lands to track threats before they arrive. Ilaro favors patience over confrontation, striking only when necessary and never missing when it matters. Among his kin, he is trusted to walk the deep jungle alone—and return.

AC 6, **HD** 4 (26hp), **Att** 1 × short bow (1d6 + 1), **THACo** 17 (15 with short bow), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 13 **CON** 13 **CHA** 14, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Short bow, short sword, sling, spear, **Weapon Specializations** Short bow

QUEEN SELYANA VARESH: RULER OF MAKOROSH

Queen Selyana Varesh, the River Crown of Makorosh, rules the fertile delta cities with calm authority and political precision. Her power flows from control of waterways that sustain agriculture, trade, and transport across the savanna kingdoms. Gentle in tone but unyielding in practice, she maintains stability through diplomacy, infrastructure, and carefully balanced alliances. In Makorosh, her word is law, carried as steadily and inexorably as the rivers that define her realm. For stats, use noble.

NALA-TORIL AND SURA-TORIL

3rd-level human fighter *(each)*

Nala-Toril and Sura-Toril Vey are the younger sisters of Queen Asha-Toril Vey. Upon Asha's ascension, both were subjected to the ancient "Mark of Singular Claim," a brutal rite that permanently mutilated them by removing one of their eyes. This act bound them from any future succession and declared Asha the sole unshadowed heir of House Vey.

Now exiled from court politics but still bound to royal blood, the sisters serve as her enforcers, and leaders of elite units of soldiers.

Each uses the following stats:

AC 4, **HD** 3 (13hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6 + 1), **THACo** 19 (18 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 11 **INT** 11 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 13, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Short bow, short sword, spear, **Weapon Specializations** Short sword

ALENYA VARESH: PRINCESS OF MAKOROSH

1st-level human cleric

Princess Alenya Varesh is the only daughter of Queen Selyana, famed across Makorosh for her beauty, elegance, and extravagant taste in silks and jewels. Adored by the court, she moves effortlessly through politics and ceremony, though those closest to her note a growing fascination with forbidden philosophies and obscure relics. In recent years, her interests have drawn the quiet attention of hidden forces, and some whisper she is being guided toward something far darker than courtly ambition. The machinations of Veyru N'Zakar have guided her to become a cleric, and he is slowly manipulating her into being a true servant of Domballah.

AC 10, **HD** 1 (3hp), **Att** 1 × club (1d6), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P14 B16 S15, **STR** 11 **INT** 11 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 17, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, staff

SSA-KETH: WAR-CHIEF OF THE VOR-KHET

Lizard man

Ssa-Keth is a war-chief of Vor-Khet, risen from the temple-cities of the swamp-deep lizard kingdoms. Scarred in ritual combat and marked with ancestral sigils, he leads with a blend of martial discipline and priestly authority. Ssa-Keth commands both warriors and swamp-bound leviathans, enforcing Vor-Khet's borders against jungle tribes and savanna intrusions. He believes order is sustained through sacrifice and memory, and that Vor-Khet's dominion is justified by the will of its ancient submerged gods

AC 5, **HD** 5+1 (3hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (1d8+1), **THACo** 14, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 13 **INT** 9 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 11, **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 175

UNITS

The armies of Axumar are as varied as its lands, divided between the structured forces of the savanna kingdoms and the fluid warbands of the jungle tribes. No single power commands the whole, but each can bring significant force to bear when called.

Kashtara fields the largest army, capable of raising 30,000–40,000 trained soldiers, supported by cavalry and battle-magi. Zambesh can muster 15,000–20,000, bolstered by mercenaries and caravan guards. Kandorai maintains 20,000–25,000 hardened warriors from its highlands, while Makorosh supports 15,000–18,000, drawn from its river cities and fertile plains.

The jungle tribes do not field standing armies, but in times of crisis can gather 10,000–15,000 warriors across allied clans—unpredictable, mobile, and intimately tied to the land.

TRIBAL WARRIORS
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (broadsword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Broadsword vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

TRIBAL SPEARMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen (see T**he Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

LIGHT CAVALRY
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 80' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen & Light Large (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

MEDIUM INFANTRY
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear), 1d6 (short sword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen, Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)
Broadsword vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

MERCENARY INFANTRY
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen (see T**he Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

ARCHERS
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (longbow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Longbow vs.
Skirmisher or Mob: +4
Light Foot: +3
Medium Foot: +2
Heavy Foot: +1

x

ELITE FOOT
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (khopesh)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Khopesh vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

LUSATANIA

Capital: Volubos
Demographics: 86% human, 10% hill dwarf, 1% half elf, 1% dragonborn, 2% other
Notable Settlements: Gilda (50,000 families; Market Value III), Volubos (90,000 families; Market Value II), Tala (30,000 families; Market Value IV), Licanis (30,000 families; Market Value IV), Pesh (40,000 families; Market Value III)
Population: 7.8 million people (1,560,000 families)
Government: Monarchy
Rulers: King Bakkas II
Annual Treasury: 1,300,000 pp (roughly 220,000 pp in the royal treasury)
Expenses: 1,130,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Rugs of exotic hides, copper ore, iron, ivory, spices, incense, slaves, exotic animals, valuable woods, fine cloth
Demand Values: Alum +1, amber -1, copper -1, purple dye -1, exotic hides -1, fish -2, glasswares -1, hides +1, horses -1, ivory -2, lead +1, luxury goods -1, olive oil -1, rugs -1, spices -1, tin -1, wood -2
Beasts of Peril: bulette, camels, chuul, displacer beast, dog, dragon turtle, dust mephit, earth elemental, flying snake, ghast, ghost, ghoul, giant centipede, giant crab, giant hyena, giant poisonous snake, giant scorpion, hunter shark, jackalwere, lamia, leopard, lion, manticore, rhinoceros, scorpionmen, vampire, wraith

Lusatania was a vassal state of the Byrisian Empire until the latter's defeat at the hands of Karth. Karth, unable to garrison such a large territory, granted the Lusatanians their freedom in exchange for beneficial trade deals and a treaty allowing them to moor their military vessels in any Lusatanian port, free of charge, for up to 1 month at a time. This has typically been only used for Karthan military ships to dock for repairs, but secretly the provision was put there to allow Karth a way to easily seize all of Lusatania's port cities, should the need (or desire) ever arise.

Volubos is the administrative and economic center of the kingdom. The fertile lands of the realm produce many commodities such as grain and olive oil, which are exported to Karth, contributing to the land's wealth

and prosperity. The principal exports from Lusatania are agriculture goods, purple dyes, and valuable woods; they also supplied Karth's gladiatorial arenas with animals, such as lions, leopards, and manticores.

An eastern mountain range by the name of Tatalas divides a large portion of the kingdom from the Obelisk Desert (for more information about this desert, refer to the Ecabatana section). The lower parts about the foot of the mountains are covered with dense and lofty forests composed of trees wiht trunks that are without knots, and of a smooth and glossy surface; the foliage is like that of the cypress, and besides sending forth a powerful odor, they are covered with a flossy down, from which, by the aid of art, a fine cloth might easily be manufactured, similar to the textures made from the produce of the silk-worm. The summit of this mountain is covered with snow even in summer, and takes ten days to reach from the bottom. In the north, a river, which bears the name of Ger, marks the entrance to a mountain pass; this northern road leads to the eastern side of the mountains, and traverses through desert valleys covered with a black sand, from which rocks that bare the appearance of having been exposed to fire project up through the earth's crust; localities are rendered quite uninhabitable by the intensity of the heat, even during winter, but this is a popular trade road for those traveling to the Obelisk Desert, or

beyond.

GOVERNMENT

The Lusatanian form of government is feudal monarchy. The nobility is divided up into two classes—the *suffets* and the *nobilas*. The *nobilas* are any of the traditional aristocratic land owners, while the *suffets* are those who rule over towns and cities—a role inherited from father to son. Each territory then is its own mini-fiefdom, all answerable to the king, who is the *suffet* of Volubos.

The *suffets* are, traditionally, descendents of great chiefs who ruled the tribes of these lands centuries ago, though anyone in theory can be made a *nobilas* or *suffet*, should they acquire enough wealth, land, and prestige.

The king's authority is absolute— also in theory. In reality, he is dependent upon the continued loyalty of his subjects. To this end, the king does not typically meddle in the affairs of the locals. However, he does insist on a centralized military, using his own funds collected from his vast taxing network to ensure he has the funds in his coffers to keep the military running... and loyal to him.

The treasury is centralized and tightly managed. Taxes are collected through a network of royal officials and contracted banks, who track production, trade, and land value across the kingdom. These records are not always accurate, but they are consistent enough to give the crown leverage. A suffet who withholds taxes risks having their accounts "reassessed," often to their disadvantage.

While each *suffet* governs their own territory as a near-independent lord, their legitimacy is tied to recognition by the crown. Each *suffet* must also periodically present tribute at Volubos, demonstrating both loyalty and capability. Failure to do so does not immediately result in open conflict, but it invites scrutiny. Royal agents begin to appear. Trade privileges may quietly shift.

The military answers directly to the king. While *suffets* maintain local guards and militias,

standing armies are funded, equipped, and commanded from Volubos. Officers are appointed by the crown, often rotated between regions to prevent local loyalties from forming. This ensures that, in times of conflict, the king commands the only truly unified fighting force in Lusatania.

The crown employs a network of scribes, merchants, and informants who move between territories under the guise of trade or administration. They report on harvests, troop movements, political tensions, and personal rivalries. Nothing in Lusatania remains local for long.

Disputes between *suffets* are common. Border disagreements, trade conflicts, and inheritance claims are brought before royal magistrates in Volubos. These hearings are formal, but outcomes are rarely based on law alone. Wealth, alliances, and perceived usefulness to the crown all play a role. A ruling may settle a dispute, or it may deliberately leave it unresolved, ensuring both parties remain dependent on royal favor.

Succession within territories is hereditary, but not guaranteed. While titles pass from parent to child, the crown must confirm each succession. This provides an opportunity to deny weak heirs, elevate rivals, or extract concessions before recognition is granted. In rare cases, the king may install an entirely new *suffet*, usually after a rebellion, failure to pay tribute, or the convenient death of a ruling line.

Nobilas, while technically beneath the *suffets*, form a secondary layer of power. These landholding elites control agriculture, local labor, and smaller armed forces. Many seek to elevate themselves to *suffet* status, and they often act as both supporters and threats to their regional rulers. A *suffet* who loses the loyalty of their *nobilas* quickly finds their authority hollow.

For outsiders, Lusatanian governance appears stable. Roads are maintained, taxes are predictable, and authority is visible. For those within it, the reality is more complex. Power is held through balance, maintained through pressure, and lost the moment that balance shifts too far in any direction.

RELIGION AND THE PRIESTHOOD

Religion in Lusatania is not a private matter. It is a pillar of the state, enforced as firmly as law and taxation. The Lusatanians worship a rigid, state-sanctioned pantheon, believed to be the only true gods of the world. These gods, they believe, grant them with order, hierarchy, conquest, and divine right. Their temples stand prominently in every city and major town, built in stone and adorned with symbols of purity and dominion. Ritual observance is expected of all citizens, from the lowest laborer to the highest suffet.

All other forms of worship are forbidden.

Foreign gods are not merely seen as false, they are believed to be demons masquerading as divine beings, seeking to corrupt, weaken, and ultimately destroy Lusatania from within. This belief is deeply ingrained, taught from childhood, reinforced in public rites, and echoed in every level of society.

Priests in Lusatania are are authorities. Each temple is staffed by a structured priesthood that operates alongside secular governance. High priests oversee major cities, often acting as advisors to *suffets* and, in some cases, rivaling them in influence. Lower-ranking clergy manage daily rites, maintain temple grounds, and monitor the spiritual conduct of the population. They also watch for transgressions. Priests are expected to identify signs of heresy, improper worship, or foreign influence. Reports are passed quietly to local authorities or, in more serious cases, to higher religious councils. Accusations do not always lead to immediate punishment, but they rarely disappear without consequence.

Public rituals are frequent and highly visible. Offerings, processions, and recitations reinforce the unity of the people under their gods. Attendance is not always mandatory, but absence is noted. Devotion is measured not just in belief, but in participation.

Travelers entering Lusatania quickly feel this pressure. Foreigners are not required to convert, but they are expected to show respect. Open worship of other gods is prohibited. Symbols, relics, or practices tied to foreign religions must be concealed or abandoned. Those who refuse may be fined, expelled, or detained depending on the severity of the offense and the disposition of local authorities.

More dangerous still are those suspected of spreading foreign beliefs. Such individuals may be brought before both secular and religious authorities. Questioning is direct, and outcomes vary. Confiscation of goods, imprisonment, forced public recantations, exile, or sacrificed to the Lusatanian pantheon are common.

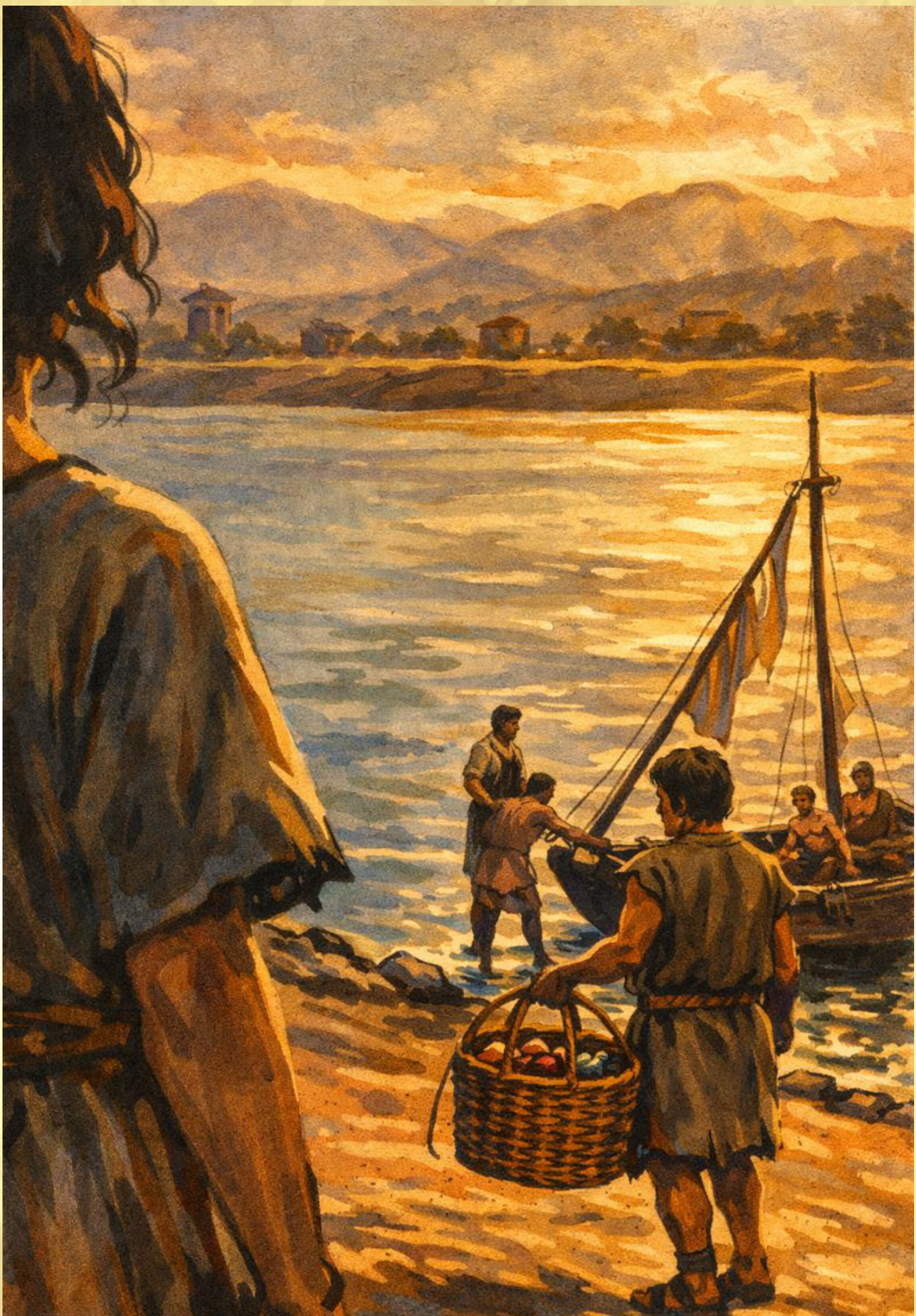
LAW AND ORDER

Most urban centers maintain a standing garrison of city guards, raised, paid, and controlled by the local *suffet*. These guards are typically lightly armored, favoring mobility and visibility over battlefield readiness. They patrol markets, gates, temples, and major roads in regular circuits, operating in small groups and answering to a captain who reports directly to the *suffet* or their appointed magistrate. Their presence is constant, and more importantly, they are known.

When a disturbance occurs, they intervene quickly, separate those involved, and detain whoever appears responsible or unable to justify themselves. Guilt is often assumed first and clarified later. Those taken are brought before a magistrate, usually within the same day, where judgment is rendered.

Magistrates are practical officials. They hear disputes, weigh testimony, consider status, and deliver outcomes with little delay. There are no extended trials, no drawn-out arguments. A case is presented, a decision is made, and punishment follows immediately. Fines are the most common resolution, scaled not just to the crime but to the perceived means of the offender. A wealthy merchant pays more for the same offense than a laborer. If coin cannot be paid, goods are seized. If nothing of value is available, labor or confinement replaces it.

More serious crimes escalate quickly. Assault, repeated theft, or disruption of trade routes may result in imprisonment, forced labor, or public punishment meant to discourage others. Murder and treason are treated as threats to order itself and are dealt with harshly and visibly. While certain laws are recognized across Lusatania—murder, theft, treason, and violations of religious order—each city enforces its own customs with equal seriousness.



These local laws are not always obvious to outsiders. Restrictions on dress during holy days, limitations on where and when one may ride a mount, curfews tied to temple observances, or prohibitions on carrying certain weapons within city walls are all common. Ignorance of these laws is not considered a defense.

Travelers are expected to ask, observe, and adapt. Those who do not often find themselves standing before a magistrate, learning the rules only after they have already broken them.

CITY LIFE

Like most of the kingdoms in the **Middle Sea**, the cities of Lusatania are overcrowded, smelly, and full of danger. But they're also full of economic opportunities, as they are the centers of commerce.

Each city is ruled through a hereditary title known as a *suffet*, who can create his own laws, dictate his own holidays and religious observances, and even create his own paramilitary force through the city guard (though these guards are not allowed to wear armor, on order of the king).

The only aspect of the city the suffet cannot control is the taxation level, which is also set by the king. The king often sends portions of his army to garrison in cities, just as a show of force, and also to report to him the goings on throughout his realm.

VOLUBOS

Volubos is the capital and beating heart of Lusatania, where King Bakkas II rules from a fortified palace overlooking a vast, crowded harbor. Grain fleets, timber barges, and foreign vessels pack its docks year-round. The city is layered with administration, temples, and wealth, with suffets, priests, and bankers all vying for influence. Law is strict, religion ever-present, and the crown's authority most visible here.

GILDA

Gilda is a prosperous coastal trade city known for its dye works and timber exports. The air carries the scent of treated cloth and resin, and its markets are filled with vibrant fabrics and carved goods. Its suffet maintains tight control over guilds and labor, ensuring steady production. Gilda is efficient, orderly, and quietly wealthy, though competition between merchant houses can turn tense.

PESH

Pesh serves as a major shipping hub for agricultural goods, with broad docks and sprawling warehouses lining its coast. Grain, oil, and livestock move through here in massive quantities. The city is practical and industrious, less concerned with luxury and more with volume. Its guard presence is heavy near the

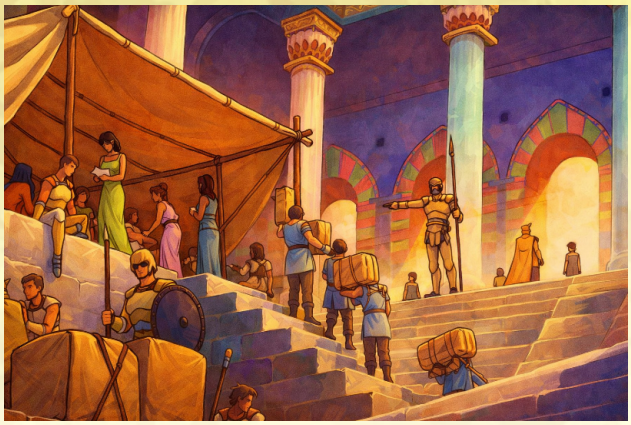
docks, where theft and smuggling are constant concerns.

TALA

Tala is a smaller port city known for its proximity to the Tatalas foothills and the strange forests that grow there. Exotic woods, fibers, and rare materials pass through its markets, often harvested at great risk. The city has a reputation for dealing in unusual goods and attracting outsiders willing to take chances. Its laws are strict, but enforcement can be uneven.

LICANIS

Licanis lies along a rugged stretch of coast where fishing fleets and beast traders operate side by side. It is one of the primary suppliers of exotic animals to Karth's arenas, and its docks often hold cages of dangerous creatures awaiting transport. The city is rougher than most, with a strong guard presence and a population accustomed to risk, violence, and profit.



THE KINGDOM OF NOK-DORI

At the far edge of the Obelisk Desert, where the last of the sea dunes give way to tangled jungle, lies the kingdom of Nok-Dori. It is a land of thresholds—between desert and forest, between the lands of Axumar and the **Middle Sea**, between old gods and imposed faith.

HISTORY

Nok-Dori is an ancient jungle-edge kingdom, culturally closer to the tribal lands than the savanna states. Its people followed ancestral spirits, river guardians, and jungle deities tied to the ley lines that run beneath the region. Chief among these was a powerful nexus near the coast, where magic pooled and manifested in unpredictable ways. This made Nok-Dori both prosperous and spiritually significant.

Centuries ago, during the height of Lusatanian expansion, a ruler of Nok-Dori—King Omesha Tal-Kerin—converted to the Lusatanian pantheon after prolonged contact with priests and merchants from Volubos.

Omesha declared the indigenous gods false—worse, he declared them demons in disguise. Then came the purge.

Temples were burned. Shamans were executed or driven into the jungle. Entire bloodlines tied to spirit traditions were erased or scattered. The priesthood of Lusatania was invited in as authorities. In a single generation, Nok-Dori was transformed. Not fully Lusatanian, but no longer what it had been.

In return, Lusatania absorbed it Nok-Dori, which became a religious extension of Lusatanian influence—a loyal satellite kingdom bound by belief. Its ports were opened, its trade aligned, and its rulers recognized under Lusatanian authority.

This arrangement lasted until the fall of Byrisia.

When Lusatania itself was conquered and fractured, Nok-Dori broke away, reclaiming its independence. The priesthood remained, but without central oversight, it changed. Rituals adapted. Local customs re-emerged in subtle forms. The old jungle beliefs did not return openly, but they did not vanish either. They seeped back into practice, reshaping the Lusatanian faith from within.

Now, centuries later, Lusatania has regained its independence—and with it, its attention has turned once more to Nok-Dori.

CURRENT TENSIONS

Today, Nok-Dori stands as an autonomous kingdom, formally allied with Lusatania through shared religion, trade, and history. Its rulers still acknowledge the Lusatanian pantheon as supreme. Its temples still resemble those of Volubos. But they are not the same.

Nok-Dori priests incorporate local elements into their rites—symbolism drawn from the jungle, seasonal rituals tied to ley-line fluctuations, and practices that Lusatanian orthodoxy consider dangerously close to heresy. To the people of Nok-Dori, this is adaptation. To certain factions within Lusatania, it is corruption. Delegations of Lusatanian priests have begun arriving in Nok-Dori, demanding reform, standardization, and obedience. Some call for correction. Others call for purification. A few have begun to speak openly of holy war. Cooler heads have so far prevailed, but no one knows if that will hold, or for how long.

LUSATANIA AND WARFARE

Warfare is bred into the DNA of the Lusatanians. Descending from warlike tribes, the Lusatanians begin to learn how to fight at a very young age. Boys learn the way of the sword and shield, and both sexes learn the way of the sling—their traditional method for hunting small game. One method is forcing children to hit a loaf of bread off of some sort of perch before allowing them to eat. This teaches them that survival is always predicated upon their skill at warfare.

PANTHEON

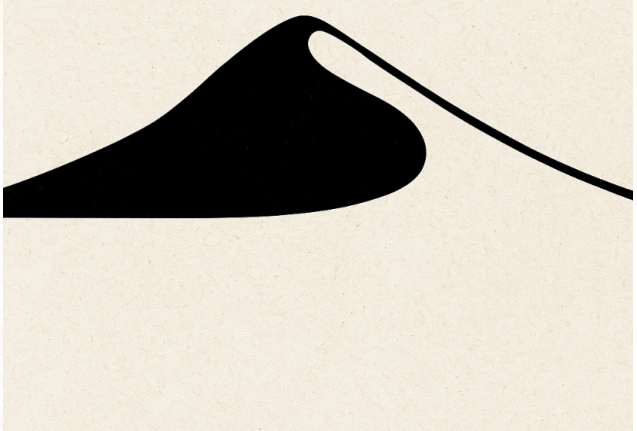
The Lusatanians fear and respect the gods. They also believe the gods are jealous gods, and therefore in each city, *suffets* dedicate each month to one particular deity. They depend on the clerics of the town to read the omens to determine which god should be favored that month. A festival is held in that deity's honor, and the god's statue is placed in the city's market during market hours.

EACUS, GOD OF FAIR WEATHER

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A White Bull
The most powerful of the Lusatanian gods

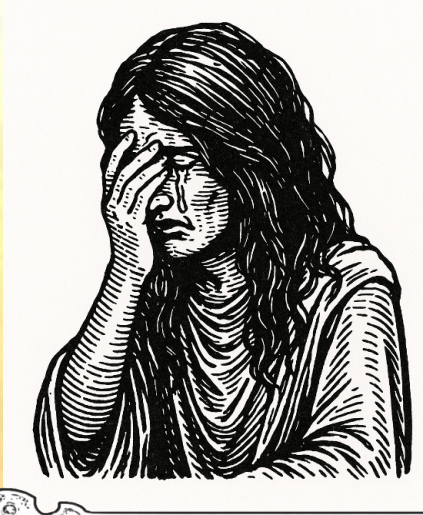
MARIBOTO, GODDESS OF THE DESERT AND THE SUN

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Sand Dune
Daughter and wife of Eacus



GAIZ, GODDESS OF DISEASE AND PLAGUE

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A Weeping Woman
Her clerics are lepers, as they are considered holy and blessed by her

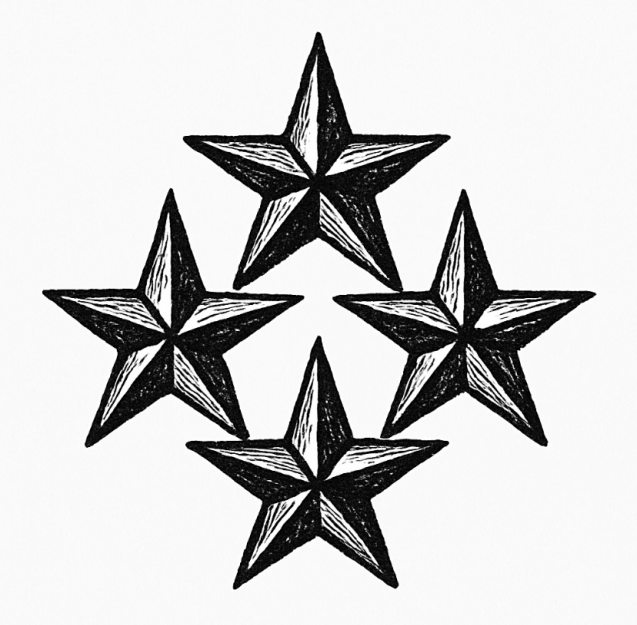


Ortza, God of Deception and War

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A Horned Lion
Brother of Eacus

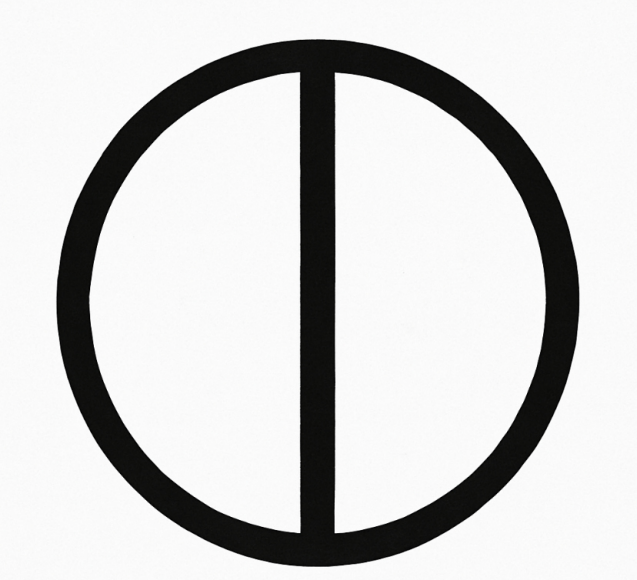
Dayla, Goddess of the Moon and Wisdom

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Four Stars in a Diamond Pattern
Daughter born of a union between Ortza and a mortal woman



Lirbara, Goddess of Health and Healing

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: A Circle Bisected by a Long, Straight Line
The blind twin sister of Gaiz



Eatae, God of Storms, Fire, and Ice

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Fire
Brother of Eacus

NPCS

VALERRA CESTINE

3rd-level human acrobat

Valerra Cestine is a nimble acrobat currently in Lusatania who once performed with a famed traveling circus out of Karth. Known for her grace and daring, she drew large crowds—until a drunken advance from the troupe's master turned violent. She fought back, leaving him scarred, and fled into the night. Now she survives on agility and wit, taking odd work across ports and cities, always moving, never staying long enough to be found.

AC 5, **HD** 3 (6hp), **Att** 1 × kopis (1d8), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 10 **INT** 14 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 16 **CON** 8 **CHA** 8, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, sword

KING BAKKAS II : WARRIOR KING

7th-level human fighter

King Bakkas is a warrior king. After his grandfather died of old age, his father, Bakkas I, ascended the throne but was assassinated only a few years later. King Bakkas II took the throne at age 15, and soon learned that his father's murder was the start of a kingdom-wide coup. He spent the next 10 years putting down the traitorous elements and avenging his father.

AC 1, **HD** 7 (33hp), **Att** 1 × bastard sword (1d8), **THACo** 14 (11 with *bastard sword +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B11 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 15 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 10 **CON** 12 **CHA** 12, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, sling, spear, sword **Weapon Specializations** Bastard sword **Possessions** *Bastard sword +1*, *potion of invulnerability*

VIRIATUS : GRAND GENERAL OF THE LUSATANIAN ARMY

8th-level human fighter

The right-hand-man of King Bakkas I, Viriatus is the man who saved the young King Bakkas II from the same assassins, and was by his side all the way through the war to retake his throne that followed. He's the most powerful fighter in all of Lusatania, and fiercely loyal to the throne. King Bakkas regards Viriatus like a father.

AC 3, **HD** 8 (39hp), **Att** 1 × falcata (1d8), **THACo** 14 (12 with *falcata +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B11 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 13 **CON** 14 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short sword, sling, spear, sword **Weapon Specializations** Falcata **Possessions** *Falcata +1*

PRINCE BAKKAROS VIRIAT : CROWN PRINCE OF LUSATANIA

4th-level human fighter

Prince Bakkaros Viriat, heir to King Bakkas II of Lusatania, is a disciplined warrior and devout servant of the state gods. Trained in arms from youth, he embodies both martial rigor and religious fervor. In recent years, he has fallen under the influence of the High Priest of Volubos, embracing an increasingly zealous interpretation of divine will. He now urges his father toward a holy war against the neighboring Kingdom of Nok-Dori, seeing it as sacred necessity.

AC 3, **HD** 3 (13hp), **Att** 1 × falcata (1d8), **THACo** 19 (18 with falcata), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 15 **INT** 12 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 14 **CON** 13 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, sling, sword **Weapon Specializations** Falcata

MARNAKAS BRIATUS : HIGH PRIEST OF LUSATANIA

7th-level human cleric

High Priest Marnakas Viriatus serves as the chief cleric of the State Pantheon in Volubos, seat of Lusatania's spiritual authority. Publicly, he enforces orthodoxy and loyalty to King Bakkas II. Privately, he cultivates the young prince as a future vessel of divine absolutism, believing the boy can be shaped into a more pliable instrument of holy rule than his father. He quietly undermines court balance to accelerate this succession.

AC 9, **HD** 7 (31hp), **Att** 1 × *rod of commanding* (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 15 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 8 **CON** 9 **CHA** 10, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, staff, **Possessions** *Rod of commanding* (6 charges, as *staff of commanding*), **Spells** *cure light wounds*, *light*, *bless*, *hold person*, *cure disease*, *remove curse*, *cure serious wounds*, *raise dead*

QUEEN N'DORAYA MAKESSA : QUEEN OF NOK-DORI

Queen N'doraya Makessa of Nok-Dori rules the Black Kingdom from the riverfortress of Kesh-Ndaru. She values the trade covenant and shared pantheon with Lusatania, which has brought wealth, arms, and stability to her coastal cities. Yet she grows increasingly wary of Lusatanian priests who demand stricter orthodoxy, fearing cultural erosion and hidden control beneath piety. She maintains outward harmony while quietly strengthening Nok-Dori's spiritual independence and river-bound defenses. Use noble for her stats.

SESHARA N'KOLO : AMBASSADOR

5th-level human barbarian

Ambassador and champion Spear Mistress Seshara N'kolo serves Nok-Dori as envoy to Volubos, where she resides within Lusatania's court as both diplomatic voice and ceremonial blade. A seasoned warrior of the river legions, she respects the alliance but distrusts the Lusatanian prince's growing zealotry and appetite for war. In secret, she has begun an affair with King Bakkas II, a dangerous intimacy that binds her further to the capital's shifting power while complicating her loyalty to Nok-Dori.

AC 5, **HD** 5 (30hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with spear), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W11 P10 B13 S13, **STR** 11 **INT** 11 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 16 **CON** 13 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, spear, staff **Weapon Specializations** Spear

LYRASSA AILUS : SUFFET OF TALA

Suffet Lyrassa Vitiatus governs the port-city of Tala, a minor but prosperous harbor nestled near the Tatalas foothills and the strange, mist-wrapped forests beyond. She rules with indolent confidence, preferring scented smoke-halls and cultivated indulgence over administrative rigor, maintained by a curated male harem drawn from coastal mercenaries and poets alike. Though outwardly loyal to Lusatania, her court grows increasingly distracted, and her governance increasingly dependent on pleasure and proxy officials. For stats, use the noble.

VIRELAN DHORATUS : NECROMANCER

4th-level human necromancer

Necromancer Virelan Dhoratus is a minor but increasingly dangerous court-adjacent arcanist in Volubos, officially licensed under the lower Collegium of Funerary Arts. Beneath the city's oldest districts he has discovered a buried Cymran necropolis—remnants of the first Volubos, destroyed when the island of Cymra collapsed and unleashed a tsunami that reshaped the coast centuries ago. The Lusatanians rebuilt over its drowned bones and stone vaults, leaving entire strata forgotten.

Virelan maintains a sealed descent point beneath a grain ledger house, where he descends alone into the ancient burial labyrinth. Using *speak with dead*, he interrogates fragmented Cymran remains, extracting half-lost histories, spell-forms, and pre-cataclysmic names that predate Lusatanian theology. His experiments focus on reconstructing Cymran death-magic and mapping how memory persists in bone after ritual decay. Officially, he studies funerary rites. In practice, he is assembling a private archive of forbidden magic beneath the capital's foundations.

AC 10, **HD** 4 (8hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 10 **INT** 13 **WIS** 2 **DEX** 11 **CON** 13 **CHA** 9, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, staff **Spells** *read magic*, *undead servitor*, *speak with dead*, *detect magic*

KAELTHAS R'NRAK : NECROMANCER

6th-level tiefling sorcerer

Kaelthas is a tiefling exile dwelling in the remote Tatalas highlands of Lusatania, where jagged peaks cut through ley-line currents. Marked by Outer Dark corruption, he communes with mountain-haunting entities left by Cymran breaches, treating them as tutors. Kaelthas rarely descends himself, instead binding

bandits, pilgrims, and stray adventurers to retrieve ritual components from ruin sites and forbidden hollows.

AC 9, **HD** 6 (15hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 15 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 13 **CON** 13 **CHA** 8, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, staff **Possessions** *gem of scrying* (as *crystal ball*), **Spells** *astrological prediction*, *burning hands*, *become swarm*, *unnatural strength*, *Evard's black tentacles*, *cause blindness or deafness*

UNITS

The Lusatanian military is a centralized royal force commanded directly by King Bakkas II, capable of fielding approximately 88,500 soldiers in times of full mobilization. Its structure blends disciplined spear infantry, agile slinger cohorts, javelin skirmishers, and a respected cavalry corps drawn from noble and frontier levies. Training is standardized through city barracks overseen by suffets, while logistics are tightly controlled by the crown. The army is designed for rapid internal suppression and decisive border campaigns.

SKIRMISHERS (×180)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (javelin), 1d8 (falcata)
QUALITY: Poor
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Javelin, Swordsmen
POA: -1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Falcata vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Javelin vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Javelin vs. Light Foot: +1

SLINGERS (×240)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (sling)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Sling vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Sling vs. Light Foot: +1

LIGHT INFANTRY (×150)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (gladius)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

MEDIUM INFANTRY (×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (falcata), 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Heavy Foot
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Swordsmen, Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Falcata vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Spearmen (see **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

SUPERIOR INFANTRY (×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 200
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (falcata)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Falcata vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2

SUPERIOR SKIRMISHERS (×60)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 200
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (gladius), 1d4 (javelin)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen, Ranged Weapon
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Gladius vs. Pikemen or Offensive Spear: +2
Javelin vs. Skirmisher or Mob: +2
Javelin vs. Light Foot: +1

HEAVY CAVALRY (×45)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 4
TOTAL HD: 400
MV: 80' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Medium Large
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +4
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen & Light Large (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

LIGHT CAVALRY (×30)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 80' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Large
CATEGORY: Skirmishers
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Spearmen & Light Large (see **Middle Sea Core Rulebook**)

NARSEH

Capital: Lyria, Baerallis, Aurataria, Dardanyan, Ardiae (see below)
Demographics: 56% human, 6% dragonborn, 9% high elf, 5% wild elf, 5% half-elf, 8% half-orc, 7% dwarf (any), 2% gnome, 1% tiefling, 1% other
Notable Settlements: Lyria (80,000 families; Market Value I), Pularis (30,000 families; Market Value IV), Baerallis (60,000 families; Market Value III), Aurataria (60,000 families; Market Value III), Dardanyan (60,000 families; Market Value III), Ardiae (60,000 families; Market Value II)
Population: 4.55 million people (910,000 families)
Government: Confederation of Feudal Monarchies
Rulers: See below
Annual Treasury: Lyria = 290,000 pp; Baerallis = 116,000 pp; Aurataria = 116,000 pp; Dardanyan = 116,000 pp; Ardiae = 116,000 pp
Expenses: Each kingdom spends more than it makes and is constantly under debt with banks
Common Trade Goods: Iron, dark wines, grains, cereals, hides, fruits, beeswax, gold, silver, copper, silk
Demand Values: Grain +1, hides -2, iron ore -1, livestock -1, lumber +1, slaves +1, wine -2, silk -2

Beasts of Peril: Aboleth, chimera, cloud giants, ettins, fire giants, ghosts, ghouls, giant eagles, giant snakes, goblinkind, leopards, medusas, mountain lions, nymphs, ogres, rocs, lizardmen, serpentmen, shapechangers, stone giants, titans, vampires

Narseh is a loose confederation of tribal kingdoms: the Lyrians, the Baerallis, the Auratarians, the Dardanyans, and the Ardiae. They have fought each other for over a thousand years, oscillating between periods of war and periods of peace. They are currently in a period of the latter, though how long that will last, only time will tell.

Only once were all five kingdoms united, under Amadokus of Lyria, in 250 KR. This was short lived, however, since Lassandros the Conqueror's invasion of Napthia took him straight through Narseh, and he conquered them as well. Amadokus died in the fighting, and it is said he exhibited such bravery, that Lassandros ordered a two-week festival to be held in honor of the fallen king. After the death of Lassandros and the collapse of his empire, Narseh regained its freedom, but each tribe went back to independence, and no single ruler has again brought them under one banner. Yet.

CITY LIFE AND CULTURE

Narsehan life is steeped in witchcraft and sorcerery. The ancient tribes came out of the mountains, where dark and forgotten gods dwelled, and they brought those beliefs and practices of worship with them. The priests of Narseh hold more power than even the nobility, and even the monarchies fear them and their magic. Sorcerery is respected and feared, and sorcerers—even foreign ones—are viewed as nobility, even if they are not.

Narsehan cities tend to be hubs of prostitution and thieves, and only the nobility or others who can afford personal protection tend to be safe. The temples of the priests are left alone by everyone but the most daring (or suicidal) of thieves.

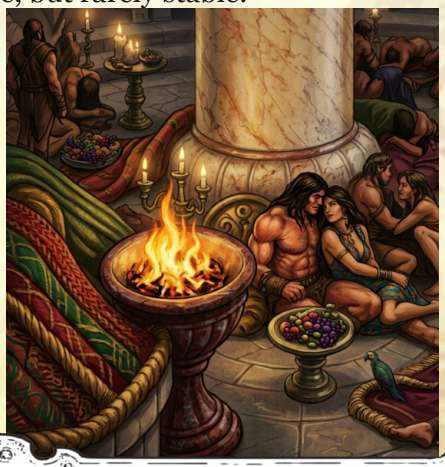
Though divided into rival kingdoms, the people of Narseh share a common cultural foundation that predates their political fragmentation. This foundation is rooted in the mountain tribes from which all five peoples descend—societies that lived in proximity to places believed to be inhabited by ancient and often hostile powers. These beliefs did not fade with urbanization. They became formalized.

At the center of Narsehan thought is the assumption that unseen forces are active, present, and responsive. These forces are not considered benevolent in any consistent sense. They reward strength, persistence, and cunning, and they punish weakness, arrogance, and ignorance. Fate exists, but it is not fixed. It can be influenced through ritual, sacrifice, negotiation, or defiance. Most people do not expect fairness from the world, and there is a rather grim cynicism that underlies their beliefs.

Magic is therefore highly valued, as it gives people more control over their destinies (so the thinking goes). Magicians of all kind are treated as individuals touched by something beyond ordinary humanity. Even when distrusted, they are afforded a degree of status and caution that places them above common social boundaries. A foreign sorcerer entering a Narsehan city may lack allies, but they will not be treated as insignificant.

Priests operate differently. Where wizards wield power, priests are believed to represent it. Their authority comes from their relationship to specific powers, cults, or traditions. Temples function as both religious and political institutions, and their influence extends into law, trade, and governance. It is not uncommon for a priest's judgment to override that of a noble, particularly in matters believed to involve spiritual consequence. This creates a persistent tension within every kingdom, as rulers must govern with the understanding that their authority is not absolute.

Social structure in Narseh reflects these realities. Nobility occupy the visible top of society, controlling land, armies, and taxation. However, their power is conditional. Priests can undermine them through religious authority, and sorcerers can bypass them through fear and influence. Wealthy merchants form a secondary tier of power, particularly in cities, where control of trade routes and goods can rival noble authority in practice. Below them are skilled laborers, soldiers, and free citizens, followed by a broad underclass of the poor, the criminal, and the enslaved. Movement between these layers is possible, but rarely stable.

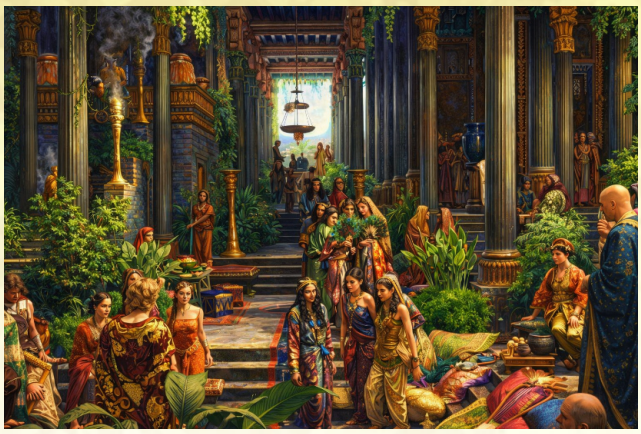


Superstition is treated as both wise and practical. Most individuals, regardless of status, observe small protective rituals as part of daily routine. Travelers mark their foreheads or hands before leaving city walls. Merchants burn incense or recite invocations before opening trade. Soldiers carry charms tied to specific cults or spirits. These acts are not performed out of devotion alone, but out of an understanding that unseen attention can be dangerous if ignored.

TRIBAL ORIGINS

All five Narsehan peoples descend from mountain tribes that once shared language, ritual practice, and a harsh, survival-driven worldview. Over centuries, migration, settlement, and control of different regions and terrains produced distinct identities. These differences are most visible in how each kingdom expresses power, through politics, war, wealth, survival, or faith, yet all retain the same underlying assumptions about magic, fate, and authority.

The Lyrians are the most urbanized of the five. Their capital, Lyria, has grown into the largest and most politically complex city in Narseh. Lyrian culture favors strategy over open conflict. Influence is built through alliances, manipulation, and information control rather than battlefield dominance. Noble houses maintain extensive networks of agents, informants, and hired blades, and political advancement is often achieved through negotiation or quiet removal of rivals. Public order exists, but beneath it is a constant current of intrigue.



Baerallis culture is rooted in martial identity. Its nobility define themselves through combat ability, lineage, and personal reputation. Status is maintained through visible strength—victory in battle, duels, and command of warriors. Insult is taken seriously, and public challenges are not uncommon among the elite. While capable of discipline in organized warfare, Baerallis society places high value on individual prowess and honor as they define it, which often leads to internal rivalries.

Aurataria is defined by wealth and trade. Its cities are dense with markets, counting houses, and merchant estates. Power is accumulated through commerce, and influence is measured in coin as much as lineage. This has produced a culture of indulgence among its upper classes. Luxury goods, exotic imports, and constant entertainment are common in its urban centers. Beneath this surface, however, Aurataria relies heavily on debt, speculation, and aggressive trade practices, making it economically powerful but structurally unstable.

Dardanyan lies closer to the harsher frontiers and has retained more of its original tribal character. Its people are known for endurance, practicality, and directness. Settlements are more fortified, and daily life is shaped by proximity to wilderness threats and contested territory. Authority is respected, but only when it proves effective. Leaders who cannot protect or provide are replaced, sometimes violently. Dardanyans are often employed as soldiers and mercenaries beyond their borders due to their reputation for reliability under harsh conditions.

Ardiae is the most visibly shaped by religion. Its cities are dominated by temple complexes, and priesthoods exert open, structured control over civic life. Ritual observance is more formalized here than in other kingdoms, and public ceremonies are frequent and politically significant. Nobility still exist, but their authority is closely tied to religious approval. In Ardiae, the boundary between governance and worship is minimal, and violations of religious order are treated as threats to the stability of the entire state.

Despite these differences, movement between kingdoms is common, especially among merchants, mercenaries, and those seeking opportunity or escape. Each culture recognizes the others as kin, but not as equals. Rivalry remains constant, even in times of peace, and the balance between them is maintained as much by mutual suspicion as by formal agreement.

THE CONFEDERATION

Narseh is not governed as a unified state. It is a confederation in name only, composed of five independent monarchies (Lyria, Baerallis, Aurataria, Dardanyan, and Ardiae), each ruled by its own king and court. There is no central authority, no permanent council, and no binding law that governs all five. What unity exists is maintained through necessity rather than design. Relations between the kingdoms are managed through a shifting network of treaties, marriages, trade agreements, and private compacts between noble houses. These agreements are rarely permanent. Alliances form to counter immediate threats, secure trade routes, or stabilize borders, and they dissolve just as quickly when conditions change. Rivalries are longstanding and often personal, rooted in generations of conflict, insult, and contested claims.

Periods of peace, such as the current one, are typically the result of exhaustion or external pressure rather than reconciliation. Each kingdom maintains its own army and prepares for the likelihood that conflict will resume. Borders are respected, but not trusted. Raids, deniable incursions, and proxy conflicts through mercenaries or agents are common, even in times officially considered peaceful.

There is no mechanism for arbitration beyond negotiation or force. When disputes escalate beyond diplomacy, they are resolved through limited war, targeted violence, or economic pressure. The confederation persists not because it is stable, but because no single kingdom has yet been able to dominate the others for long.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

Within each kingdom, authority is formally centered in the monarch. The king controls military command, taxation, and the granting of titles and land. In practice, this authority is distributed across a network of noble houses that hold territory, maintain private forces, and administer local governance. These houses are both the foundation of the kingdom's power and its primary source of internal instability.

Land is divided among nobles who collect taxes, enforce local order, and supply troops when called upon. Loyalty to the crown is expected, but not guaranteed. Strong rulers maintain control through a combination of reward, intimidation, and careful balancing of rival houses. Weak rulers face fragmentation, as nobles pursue their own interests with increasing independence.

Overlaying this structure is the influence of the priesthood. In all five kingdoms, temples and their leaders possess authority that operates alongside and sometimes above secular rule. Priests can legitimize a ruler, condemn them, or interfere in matters of law and succession under the justification of divine will. This influence is strongest in Ardiae, but it is present everywhere. Monarchs who ignore the priesthood risk unrest, loss of support, or direct opposition framed as religious necessity. As a result, rulership in Narseh is never purely political. It is a constant negotiation between crown, nobility, and temple, where authority must be maintained through force combined with perception and control of belief.

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Narseh's economy is driven by city-states competing for control of trade, resources, and transit routes. Each kingdom maintains its own production base: iron from upland mines, grain and cereals from interior valleys, dark wines from cultivated terraces, hides and livestock from rural holdings, and precious metals drawn from older veins in the hills. Luxury goods move through Narseh rather than originating in it, making its cities critical points of exchange rather than production alone.

Internal trade between the five kingdoms is constant despite political tension. Caravans move under contract, often guarded by mercenaries, carrying goods between rival territories that are economically dependent on one another. External trade is equally important. Narseh sits along routes that connect larger powers, and its ports and markets function as intermediaries for foreign goods entering inland regions.

Coin does not remain in circulation long. Wealth accumulates at the top and is quickly redirected into war preparation, construction, indulgence, or debt repayment. As a result, liquidity within the system is uneven, and most large-scale activity relies on credit rather than immediate payment.

DEBT & BANKING

All five kingdoms operate under significant and persistent debt. Royal courts spend beyond their means to maintain armies, fund political maneuvering, and sustain the expectations of their nobility. This has led to the rise of powerful financial institutions that exist both within and outside Narseh.

Banking is controlled by a combination of merchant houses, independent financiers, temple vaults, and foreign lenders with interests in maintaining Narseh's instability without allowing collapse. These institutions provide loans, manage large transfers of wealth, and issue letters of credit that allow merchants and nobles to operate without carrying physical coin.

A ruler's power is tied not only to land and military strength, but to their ability to manage creditors. Defaults are rare because the consequences are immediate and severe.

Alongside formal trade exists a fully developed and widely tolerated black market. Smuggling networks operate across borders, moving goods that are restricted, taxed heavily, or outright illegal. These networks rely on bribery, hidden routes, and the cooperation of local officials who benefit from their presence.

Common illicit goods include sstolen relics from ancient sites, refined poisons, forbidden texts, and magical components that cannot be acquired through legal channels. Some of these goods originate within Narseh, while others pass through it en route to other regions.

Organized crime is not separate from the broader economy. It is embedded within it. Criminal groups maintain relationships with merchants, nobles, and even temples, providing services that official structures cannot openly support. Theft, extortion, and protection rackets are common, particularly in urban centers, but so is information brokerage and discreet problem-solving.

Attempts to eliminate these networks are rare. Most authorities find it more practical to control and profit from them rather than risk destabilizing the systems that rely on their existence.

LAW, ORDER & PUNISHMENT

Law in Narseh is not a unified system. It is a layered structure of enforcement shaped by whoever currently holds power in a given district—noble house, temple authority, merchant syndicate, or armed cohort. Written codes exist, but they are rarely decisive. What matters is who enforces the law, who benefits from it, and who is willing to contest it.

In practice, order is maintained unevenly. Some districts are tightly controlled and visibly patrolled. Others operate under informal authority where law exists only when it is imposed.

City guards exist in all major settlements, but they are not a neutral force. In Lyria and Aurataria, guards are formally organized under civic authority, but their loyalty is divided. Merchant houses, creditors, and noble patrons all exert influence through funding, bribes, or political leverage. A guard unit may enforce law strictly in one street and ignore it entirely in another depending on who claims that territory.

In Baerallis and Dardanyan, guards are more openly tied to noble houses. Many serve as retainers first and city enforcers second. Law enforcement in these cities often reflects the priorities of dominant families rather than any consistent code.

In Ardiae, enforcement is shared between civic guards and temple authorities. Priests or their appointed agents may accompany patrols, particularly in temple districts. In these areas, violations are framed as spiritual offenses as much as legal ones.

Corruption is assumed. Most guards accept payment to overlook minor crimes, delay response, or redirect attention. Refusal to

participate in this system is rare and often short-lived.

Patrol patterns are predictable in wealthy districts and erratic elsewhere. Noble quarters, temple complexes, and major markets see regular patrols at fixed intervals. Outer districts, slums, and dock areas are patrolled irregularly, often only in response to visible disruption or orders from above.

Noble districts are heavily controlled, with rapid response to disturbance. Temple districts are watched closely, with enforcement influenced by religious authority. Market zones are protected to maintain trade stability, but bribery is common. Outer districts are loosely controlled, often dominated by gangs, mercenaries, or local strongmen.

Justice in Narseh is immediate when it needs to be, and delayed when it is useful. Magistrates, noble officials, or temple authorities preside over formal judgments. Their role is not to determine truth in an abstract sense, but to produce an outcome that maintains order and preserves the interests of those in power. Trials occur, but they are brief and rarely investigative. Testimony, reputation, and visible status carry more weight than physical evidence. In many cases, the outcome is decided before proceedings begin. For minor offenses, guards may issue punishment on the spot without formal judgment. This is especially common in crowded districts where processing offenders formally is impractical.

For more serious crimes, the accused may be held briefly before appearing before a magistrate or noble representative. The duration of detention depends less on the crime and more on who intervenes.

Foreigners operate at a disadvantage. Without a recognized patron, they are treated as expendable. A foreign adventurer may be fined heavily, detained arbitrarily, or punished more severely simply because no one of status intervenes on their behalf.

Punishment in Narseh is designed to reinforce hierarchy as much as to deter crime.
Minor crimes such as petty theft, disorderly conduct, or minor fraud are typically handled through fines scaled to what authorities believe the offender can pay; forced labor contracts, often tied to guilds or public works; public penalties such as branding, shaving, or humiliation rituals; or confiscation of goods or equipment. Failure to pay fines often escalates punishment immediately.
Major crimes—murder, large-scale theft, sedition, or offenses against temple authority—are treated more severely. Mutilation is populat in Baerallis and Dardanyan, as a visible mark of consequence serves as a useful deterrence. Public executions are also common, in all of the kingdoms.

Magical or priest-imposed punishments exist alongside physical penalties. These may include curse bindings that restrict movement or action; spiritual marks visible to priests; or magical detection enforced oaths that carry supernatural consequence if broken.

For players, law in Narseh is a constant pressure rather than a fixed system. Crime carries risk, but that risk is uneven. Petty theft in a crowded market may go unnoticed. The same act in a noble district may trigger immediate pursuit. Violence draws attention quickly if it is visible. A fight in an alley may be ignored. A fight in a market square will bring guards within minutes.

INNS & HOSPITALITY

Hospitality in Narseh is transactional and rarely neutral. An inn is not just a place to sleep, but a controlled space with its own loyalties, risks, and protections. Where a party chooses to stay determines how they are treated, what they learn, and how quickly trouble finds them. At the lowest tier, lodging houses and drinking dens are loud, crowded, and openly unsafe.

These places are used by laborers, smugglers, transient mercenaries, and those avoiding notice. Rooms are often shared or improvised, sometimes nothing more than space on a floor. Theft is expected. Violence is common but rarely escalates unless it interferes with the establishment's profit. Owners tolerate crime as long as it remains contained. Information flows freely here, but much of it is unreliable, exaggerated, or bait.

Mid-tier inns serve merchants, caravan guards, and minor officials. These are structured businesses with reputations to maintain. Rooms are private or semi-private, food is consistent, and staff enforce basic order. Disputes are broken up quickly, and repeat troublemakers are removed. These inns often maintain quiet relationships with local guards or mercenary companies, ensuring that serious disruptions are handled before they spread. Reliable information can be found here, though it is rarely given freely.

High-end houses operate as controlled environments for nobility, wealthy merchants, and foreign dignitaries. Entry is monitored, and unknown guests are questioned or turned away unless sponsored. Interiors are quiet and guarded, and designed for privacy. These establishments double as meeting grounds for negotiations, conspiracies, and discreet arrangements. Staff are observant and loyal to ownership, not to guests. Information here is valuable, but access to it depends on status, coin, or leverage.

Most inns cluster around movement and money. Markets, caravan gates, and port districts support the highest concentration, where travelers arrive with coin and leave with information. Red-light districts blend entertainment, vice, and lodging into a single economy.

Food and drink vary by class but are rarely scarce. Even low establishments serve strong drink and filling meals, though quality is inconsistent. Better inns provide imported wines, preserved meats, and spiced dishes tied to trade routes. Conversation is part of the service. Many innkeepers act as informal brokers, connecting guests with guides, guards, smugglers, or buyers. Some sell information directly, others trade it quietly to interested parties.

Additional services are common and often expected. Companionship, gambling, and controlled substances are available in most urban inns, though quality and safety vary widely. In lower districts, these are unregulated and frequently dangerous. In higher establishments, they are managed, priced accordingly, and protected by house rules.

Sleeping arrangements define risk. In low-tier dens, a character's belongings are only as safe as what they can physically secure. In mid-tier inns, locked rooms and watchful staff reduce theft, but do not eliminate it. In high-end houses, security is maintained by guards, controlled access, and sometimes magical precautions.

Stabling is usually separate from lodging, either in attached courtyards or nearby compounds.

TRADE & EQUIPMENT

Most cities are built around layered markets. Open-air stalls fill streets near gates, plazas, and main roads. These are loud, crowded, and fluid. Prices are negotiable, quality varies, and goods move quickly. Hawkers compete for attention, and disputes are common. A buyer can find almost anything here if they are willing to search, ask questions, and accept risk.

Deeper within the cities are controlled trade districts. These are governed by merchant guilds, noble charters, or long-standing commercial agreements. Goods are inspected, prices are more stable, and transactions are recorded.

Merchant guilds exert quiet control across both spaces. Even in open markets, stallholders often answer to a larger network that regulates supply, sets informal price floors, and limits competition.

Weapons are widely available across Narseh. In open markets and lower districts, common arms (knives, spears, short blades, and basic bows) can be purchased without difficulty. These are functional, often locally made, and of uneven quality. Better equipment is found in controlled districts, where smiths operate under guild oversight. These weapons are more reliable, properly balanced, and maintained to consistent standards. Armor follows the same pattern, with simple leather and patched mail in common circulation, while fitted mail, scale, and plate are reserved for those who can afford both the cost and the connections.

BANKS & FINANCIAL POWER

Wealth in Narseh rarely sits idle. Coin moves through institutions that convert it into influence, obligation, and leverage. Rulers, merchants, and temples all depend on systems of credit that extend beyond any single kingdom's control.

Banking is divided between three dominant forces. Merchant banks operate as profit-driven institutions, tied to trade networks and noble patronage. They finance caravans, underwrite ventures, and extend credit to those with collateral or reputation. Temple vaults serve a different function. They store wealth under the authority of priesthoods and frame debt as both financial and spiritual obligation. Defaulting on a temple loan is treated as defiance of the order those temples represent. Foreign lenders, often backed by powers outside Narseh, provide large-scale loans to rulers and major houses. Their influence is quiet but significant, and they prefer long-term dependency over immediate repayment.

Banks are placed in visible, defensible locations—near markets, within fortified districts, or attached to temple complexes. Security is layered. Guards are present, but they are only the outer measure. Strongrooms, controlled access points, and sometimes magical wards protect what lies within. Theft is rare (but not unheard of).

Services are practical and widely used. Loans allow nobles to wage war, merchants to expand trade, and adventurers to operate beyond their immediate means. Storage is offered for coin, valuables, and documents, often at a cost that reflects the level of security provided. Letters of credit are essential for long-distance trade, allowing wealth to move without the physical risk of transport. Currency exchange is common in larger cities, particularly where foreign coin enters circulation.

MERCENARY CULTURE

Mercenary work is a normal and accepted part of life in Narseh. Standing armies exist, but they are rarely sufficient on their own. Nobles, merchants, temples, and even banks rely on hired blades to fill gaps in power, enforce decisions, and act where official forces cannot.

Mercenaries operate either independently or as part of organized companies. Independent sellswords take smaller contracts, short-term work, or tasks requiring discretion. Companies offer structure—chains of command, established reputations, and the ability to field larger forces. Some companies are tied loosely to noble houses or guilds, while others maintain strict neutrality, selling their services to the highest bidder.

Contracts vary widely in formality. Some are written and witnessed, especially when large sums or political consequences are involved.

Others are verbal, sealed by reputation or immediate necessity. Loyalty is expected only within the bounds of the contract. Once terms are fulfilled, obligation ends unless renewed.

Work is constant. Caravan protection is among the most common, as trade routes are exposed and valuable. Political violence is less visible but more profitable, involving intimidation, targeted killings, or suppression of rivals. Monster hunting provides irregular but potentially high rewards, particularly in frontier regions or areas where older threats persist. Debt enforcement overlaps with both mercenary and financial systems, placing hired blades in direct service to creditors.

Reputation governs opportunity. A mercenary known for completing contracts without deviation will find steady work. One known for betrayal may still be hired, but only for tasks where betrayal is expected or controlled. Word travels quickly between cities, carried by merchants, innkeepers, and other mercenaries.

Risk is constant. Non-payment is a known hazard, particularly when dealing with unstable patrons or failing houses. Retaliation is an accepted response. Mercenaries who are cheated may return with greater force, align with rivals, or take payment in other forms. This creates a cycle where trust is valuable but never assumed.

For players, mercenary culture provides both structure and freedom. It offers clear paths to employment, but also places them within a system where every action contributes to reputation.

THE DELLIOS SWAMP

The Dellios Swamp occupies the northwestern edge of Lyria, where the River Stykia slows, widens, and breaks into a maze of channels before reaching the sea. What appears from a distance to be a single wetland is in practice a shifting boundary between land and water, with firm ground giving way to drowned forest, reed-choked flats, and blackwater basins that change with the seasons and the tide.

The outer margins of the swamp are settled and worked. Dozens of towns and river villages cling to stable ground along the Stykia's branching edges. These communities survive through careful use of what the swamp provides. Fishing is constant, supplying both local needs and inland markets. Bog iron is cut from submerged deposits and refined in small, smoke-heavy furnaces built on raised earth. Harvesters venture into the shallows for rare herbs, resins, and medicinal plants that do not grow elsewhere. Certain trees produce a dense, dark bark that, when processed, yields dyes prized across Narseh for their depth and permanence.

Life in these settlements is practical and guarded. Buildings are raised on timber supports or packed earth mounds to avoid flooding. Walkways connect structures above the waterline. Boats are as common as carts. Every household understands that the swamp provides, but does not forgive carelessness. Children are taught early which waters are safe, which paths shift, and which sounds mean retreat.

Beyond these edges, the swamp changes character. The water deepens, the ground softens, and visibility drops as dense vegetation closes overhead. Paths disappear, replaced by narrow channels that twist unpredictably. Sound carries poorly, and distance is difficult to judge.

Travel without a guide is slow and dangerous. Even experienced locals rarely venture far inward without purpose.

At its edges, the Dellios Swamp is a resource to be managed and respected. For those who enter its interior, it becomes something else entirely—a place where navigation fails, territory is unseen, and survival depends less on strength than on understanding what should not be approached, with all manner of poisons, diseases, and other dangers. Including the dreaded swamp rot—a deadly magical disease that ages its victim 100 years in a matter of minutes.

The interior of the Dellios is not unclaimed. It is held by numerous tribes of lizardfolk and serpentmen, whose territories overlap, conflict, and shift over time. Lizardfolk settlements are typically built around stable pools or elevated ridges, marked by simple structures of reed, mud, and bone. Their society is direct and territorial. They defend hunting grounds, water access, and nesting areas with consistency, but do not pursue conflict beyond what is necessary to maintain control.

The serpentmen are less visible and more deliberate. Their presence is marked by hidden pathways, half-submerged stonework, and ritual sites concealed beneath the canopy. They avoid open confrontation when possible, preferring ambush, misdirection, and the use of terrain. Their settlements are rarely found unless they wish to be.

Both groups know the swamp intimately in ways outsiders cannot replicate. They move through water and mud without hesitation, use concealed routes, and exploit natural hazards as extensions of their defenses. What appears to be empty water or passable ground often is not.

Deeper still, the swamp shows signs of older influence. Ruined stone structures, partially reclaimed by water and root, suggest prior habitation or construction, though their origin is uncertain. Some are avoided even by the swamp's inhabitants.

The serpentmen venerate a group of immense serpents known locally as the "Sons of Set." These creatures are not commonly seen, but their presence is felt. Channels are found cleared of obstruction where no current should run. Entire stretches of water fall silent without visible cause. Ritual sites marked with bone, blood, and carved symbols appear and vanish over time. Sacrifices are made to these entities, and those taken into the interior are rarely seen again.

THE DROW

The drow are what remains of the Tucarans after the collapse of their surface civilization and the fall of their goddess, Lloth. They are now an underground civilization that evolved from long-term isolation from the surface world.

Over generations, the refugee drow who migrated to Narseh formed entire city-states in vast cavern systems, some natural, others expanded or entirely excavated through a combination of labor, engineering, and controlled magic. They are structured urban environments with economies, infrastructure, and political systems as complex as any surface

kingdom. Despite their separation from the sunlit world, the drow are not isolated. They maintain selective contact with surface powers through trade, coercion, and intermediary agreements. Their survival depends on exchange.

The drow inhabit vast subterranean cities carved into caverns so large they function as enclosed worlds. These spaces are environments actively shaped over generations. Stone is cut, reinforced, and reworked into tiered districts, vertical causeways, and suspended structures anchored by columns or grown through magic. The largest of these cities rival surface capitals in scale, though they expand as much downward and inward as they do outward.

Light is controlled rather than abundant. Phosphorescent fungi, alchemical lamps, and bound magical sources provide dim, steady illumination calibrated for drow vision. Bright light is avoided. It is uncomfortable, wasteful, and tactically unsound. Darkness is not absence, but infrastructure.

Airflow is managed through a combination of natural shafts, engineered vents, and controlled heat differentials. Without this, the deeper caverns would become stagnant or toxic. Water is drawn from underground rivers and condensation systems, then distributed through cisterns and channels. Waste is not ignored. It is processed, redirected, or fed into fungal agriculture and carrion systems that form part of the city's ecological base.

Food production is localized and practical. Fungus, lichen, and subterranean plant analogues form the bulk of agricultural output. Livestock is limited to creatures that can survive in darkness and confined environments. Meat is therefore less common and often reserved for the elite or for ritual use. Surface goods, when acquired through trade, are treated as luxuries.

Space is the most valuable resource. Every chamber, corridor, and platform has a defined use. Expansion requires labor, risk, and time, so cities grow deliberately. Collapses, cave-ins, and structural failures are constant threats, particularly in newly carved regions or areas weakened by magical strain.

SOCIETY AND STRUCTURE

Drow society is rigid in form but unstable in practice. It retains the hierarchical structure of the Tucarans, but without the certainty that once sustained it.

Power is organized through noble houses. Each house controls territory within the city, along with labor forces, military strength, and access to resources. These houses function as semi-independent entities bound together by necessity rather than trust. Alliances exist, but they are temporary. Betrayal is not exceptional behavior. It is an expected outcome of ambition.

Authority flows downward but is constantly contested. Leadership positions are maintained through vigilance, intelligence, and the ability to anticipate threats from within as much as from outside. A ruler who relaxes control does not remain a ruler.

Priesthoods dedicated to Lloth hold a central role in maintaining ideological cohesion. Unlike the surface-era Tucarans, whose worship was expressed through spectacle, drow devotion is more controlled and persistent. Ritual is constant, integrated into governance, warfare, and daily life.

Lloth is understood as a being of hunger, transformation, and survival. Her fall is not interpreted as defeat, but as a necessary transition. The drow believe they share in that transformation. Their existence is proof of her continued influence.

All major decisions are framed through this lens. Expansion, war, sacrifice, and trade are all justified as steps toward a single long-term objective: her return.

SILK PRODUCTION

One of the primary economic foundations of drow society is silk production on a scale unknown on the surface.

Deep caverns are dedicated entirely to the breeding and maintenance of giant spiders. These are managed populations. The spiders are fed, contained, and selectively bred for silk yield, strength, and consistency. Entire castes of workers are responsible for their care, often operating under strict protocols to minimize loss of life.

Harvesting silk is dangerous but routine. Workers enter controlled sections, extract usable strands, and retreat before provoking full aggression. Magical methods are sometimes used to pacify or direct the spiders, though overuse risks destabilizing the population.

The silk itself is a highly valued trade good. It is stronger and lighter than most surface textiles, capable of being woven into armor, rope, garments, and specialized tools. Its rarity and quality make it desirable across multiple regions, including Karth and other trade centers.

Processing facilities exist within the cities, where raw silk is cleaned, spun, and treated. This work is precise and labor-intensive. Waste is minimized, and lower-quality material is repurposed into secondary goods.

TRADE & EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Despite their isolation, the drow are not cut off from the surface. Trade routes connect their cities to specific, controlled access points—caves, mountain passes, and deep tunnels that intersect with surface regions.

Trade is conducted carefully. Drow do not expose their cities directly. Instead, exchanges occur at designated meeting points or through intermediaries who understand the risks.

Silk is their primary export, but not their only one. Alchemical reagents, rare minerals, and crafted goods also move through these channels. In return, they acquire surface resources that cannot be produced underground in sufficient quantity.

One of the most significant trade relationships is with the Kingdom of the Ghouls in the Katha Mountains.

The Kingdom of the Ghouls controls deep mining operations that produce rare gems and materials inaccessible to most living populations. These resources are valuable but difficult to extract safely due to the nature of the ghouls themselves.

Drow are uniquely suited to interact with the ghouls. Their immunity to the paralyzing effects of ghoul touch allows them to operate within ghoul-controlled territories without the same level of risk faced by others. This creates a mutual dependency.

The exchange is direct and pragmatic. The drow provide slaves—captives taken from raids, surface conflicts, or internal punishment systems. The ghouls provide gems, minerals, and materials drawn from depths beyond conventional reach.

Neither side trusts the other, but both recognize the value of the arrangement. Trade sites are heavily controlled, with clear boundaries and minimal negotiation beyond agreed terms. Any disruption is met with immediate and decisive response.

CULTURE AND PSYCHOLOGY

From an anthropological perspective, drow culture reflects long-term adaptation to constrained, high-risk environments.

Scarcity of space and resources produces a mindset focused on efficiency and control. Every action has consequence. Waste is minimized. Weakness is exploited.

Constant internal competition creates a population that is observant, cautious, and strategically minded. Trust is limited and conditional. Social interactions are layered with implication, status signaling, and risk assessment.

Aesthetic values persist, but they are expressed differently than in Tucaran times. Beauty is found in precision, symmetry, and mastery of form rather than excess. Objects, structures, and even individuals are judged by how well they embody control and refinement under pressure.

Religion reinforces these traits. Lloth is not a comforting figure. She is a model of transformation through suffering and dominance. Devotion to her is expressed through endurance, ambition, and the willingness to impose one's will on others.

All aspects of drow civilization are oriented toward a single, unifying goal: the return of Lloth. This is not treated as myth or distant prophecy. It is an active, ongoing objective. Rituals are designed to strengthen her presence. Sacrifices are made to feed her influence. Magical research seeks ways to breach or weaken the boundaries that confine her to the Abyss.

Noble houses compete not only for power within the city, but for proximity to this goal. The house that plays the greatest role in her return would not simply rule the drow—it would define the next age of their existence.

Until that moment, the drow endure. They build, they scheme, they trade, and they sacrifice. They do not see themselves as fallen.

They see themselves as waiting.

THE KINGDOM OF THE GHOULS

High in the Katha Mountains, where the peaks cut off weather systems and the stone turns black with mineral pressure, lies the Kingdom of the Ghouls: a stable, organized civilization that has endured for at least a thousand years. Its existence is known to surface powers, though rarely discussed openly.

The kingdom began as a cult devoted to Orcus, Demon Prince of the Undead. In its earliest form, it was but a convergence of mountain enclaves practicing forbidden rites of necromancy and fleshcraft. Over time, these cults unified around a shared ambition: to transcend death entirely and become something permanent in hunger and will. Their turning point came with the summoning of a powerful servant of Orcus; a powerful demon known as Famine.

Famine was not a mere spirit or minor demon, but an embodied force of deprivation and endless need. The cult attempted to bind and control it, but the ritual collapsed into inversion. Rather than serving them, Famine marked them. It bound the cult to an unending condition of

hunger—physical, psychological, and metaphysical. They could never be satisfied. Eating only prolonged the need. Death no longer ended it. However, the curse did not destroy their minds. Instead, it transformed them.

Unlike lesser ghouls, these beings retained full intelligence, memory, and strategic reasoning. Their bodies altered as well: skin pallid and taut over bone, hair lost entirely, teeth sharpened into predatory structure suited for tearing flesh. They became known as *ghuls*, distinguishing them from the mindless undead *ghouls* that now serve them.

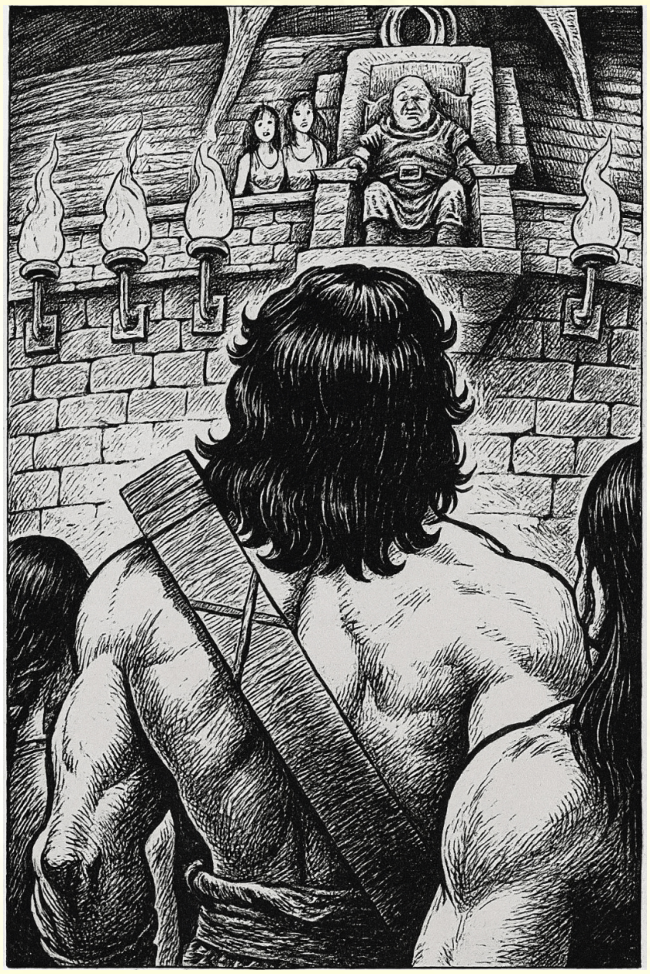
SOCIETY OF THE GHOULS

Ghoul society is structured around controlled deprivation and regulated consumption. The curse of hunger is universal, but its expression is managed through law, hierarchy, and ritualized release.

At the top of this damned structure is the Ghoul King. The King isthe central stabilizing force of the entire kingdom. His authority is absolute in matters of law, war, and distribution

of resources. He is both sovereign and regulator, ensuring that the population does not collapse into uncontrolled frenzy.

Parallel to his authority is the High Priest of Orcus. This figure holds equal influence, but in a different domain. Where the King governs order, the High Priest governs meaning. The priest interprets the will of Orcus and Famine, defines acceptable forms of hunger expression, and oversees the kingdom's most sacred rituals. In practice, neither can easily act without the other, their power balanced.



Beneath them is a rigid hierarchy of ghul nobility, military commanders, and administrative functionaries. Authority is earned through success in controlled violence, resource acquisition, and ritual participation. Failure in these domains results in demotion into more desperate conditions of hunger management.

The society is supported by vast numbers of lesser undead ghouls. These are not equal citizens but engineered or transformed labor units. They serve as soldiers, guards, laborers, and expendable participants in rituals and games. They lack the full intelligence of the ghuls but retain enough instinct to function in organized systems of command.

CULTURE & BEHAVIOR

Ghuls do not experience hunger as an occasional state. It is continuous, low-level, and omnipresent. This shapes every aspect of behavior, from politics to entertainment.

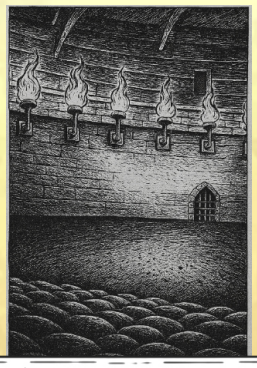
They prefer the flesh of intelligent creatures over all other forms of sustenance. This preference is not purely biological; it is cultural and ritualized. Consuming sentient flesh is believed to temporarily sharpen awareness and bring momentary relief from the curse imposed by Famine. It is also a status marker.

Because of this, slavery is central to their economy and culture. Captives are valued not only as labor but as future consumption. The acquisition of slaves is a major political and military objective, often used to measure the success of raids or campaigns against surface regions and rival factions. Disreputable slave traders also often bring caravans of slaves on a semi-regular basis.

ENTERTAINMENT

To prevent uncontrolled outbreaks of feeding behavior, ghul society channels violence into structured forms of entertainment and ritual. Two primary institutions serve this function.

The first is gladiatorial combat. Captives, slaves, and condemned individuals are forced into arena combat under controlled conditions. These are carefully managed events where outcomes, while lethal, are framed as both entertainment and ritual satisfaction. The spectacle allows the population to experience collective release without destabilizing broader order.



The second is the labyrinth hunt. In these events, selected individuals are released into vast underground labyrinth systems beneath ghul territory. These labyrinths are engineered environments—part natural cavern, part constructed maze—filled with controlled hazards, false passages, and hunting routes. Participants are then released into the system and hunted for sport. Hunters are assigned, territories are defined, and outcomes are recorded. The objective is not only consumption, but demonstration of skill, endurance, and dominance over prey.

FAMINE

Deep beneath the oldest strata of the Katha Mountains, below the carved halls of the Ghoul King and the black basalt arteries of the kingdom, there exists a sealed region that is feared even by the undead. This is where Famine dwells.

Famine is the demonic entity that first marked the ancestors of the ghuls during the failed summoning that birthed their civilization, and he dwells deep in slumber.

Famine is not constantly active. Instead, he enters long periods of dormancy, as though the mountain itself is holding its breath around him. During these long sleeps, the Kingdom of the Ghouls continues its structured existence. The curse of hunger persists in its population, but it remains regulated through law, ritual, and controlled violence. The High Priest of Orcus and the Ghoul King interpret Famine's cycles.

But when Famine wakes, the structure changes. When Famine stirs, the first sign is psychological. Hunger within all ghuls intensifies beyond normal bounds, becoming sharper, more intrusive, and less controllable. Even disciplined members of their society begin to experience difficulty maintaining ritual restraint.

At this stage, the High Priest of Orcus performs the formal acknowledgment rites, and the kingdom initiates the offering cycle.

Living sacrifices are gathered from within the ghul domain—typically prisoners or slaves—and presented in deep ceremonial vaults that descend toward Famine's resting place.

Famine consumes not only flesh, but essence. Those offered are not merely killed; they are unmade in the act of feeding, their suffering extending beyond death into residual psychic imprint. It is this suffering that sustains him.

THE FAMINE PLAGUE

On occasion, Famine does not simply consume. He marks. Those marked become carriers of what is known among surface scholars as the Famine Plague. It is not a natural disease, nor purely magical affliction, but something closer to a demonic virus.

Infected individuals begin with acute hunger, far beyond normal physiology. This is quickly followed by cognitive collapse, aggression, and sensory distortion. Within hours, they lose stable identity and become what are effectively rabid undead—howling, violent, and driven entirely by consumption. Claws and fangs push out their normal fingernails and teeth, carrying the virus.

These infected are highly contagious. Bite and scratch transmission spreads the condition rapidly through living populations. Entire settlements can collapse into outbreaks if exposure is uncontrolled.

Famine ghouls use stats of a **ghast.** Those suffering even 1 HP of damage from a bite or claw attack must make a save versus death or transform in 1d6 turns.

Infected individuals are deliberately released into surface regions, particularly the kingdoms of Narseh and surrounding territories, with hopes of the plague spreading to as many people and communities as possible.

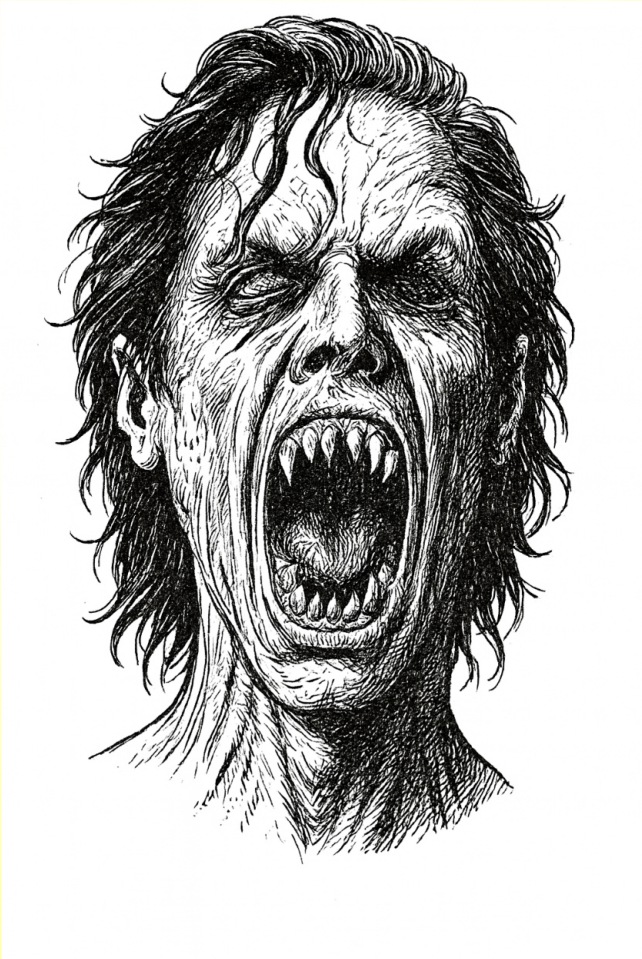
These incursions function as both ritual release and strategic destabilization. The plague spreads through villages, trade routes, and border settlements, creating temporary collapse zones of violence and chaos.

However, the Famine Plague has a self-limiting structure.

Most infected individuals die within one to three days of transformation. The condition is metabolically and spiritually unstable; it burns through the host faster than it can sustain itself. As a result, outbreaks rarely persist beyond a week before collapsing entirely.

What prevents the plague from being merely a biological anomaly is its metaphysical function. During outbreaks, Famine feeds at a distance through psychic resonance. The suffering generated by infection—panic, violence, hunger, betrayal, and death—acts as a form of nourishment. The more widespread and chaotic the outbreak, the more nourishment he receives.

Once this psychic threshold is met, Famine returns to dormancy. His influence recedes, hunger levels within ghul society stabilize, and the Kingdom of the Ghouls resumes its regulated cycles of consumption, governance, and trade.



THE VAMPIRE CLANS

High in the same fractured mountain range that holds the Kingdom of the Ghouls, there are regions that do not belong to either stone or sky. Among these are the high cavern-ridges and wind-carved peaks where the vampire clans established their exile settlements. Unlike the ghuls below, whose society was born from a single cursed transformation, the vampires of the Katha Mountains arrived as refugees.

They were once part of a broader vampiric lineage that had spread across surface civilizations in fragmented noble courts and hidden bloodlines. Over time, those lineages became politically inconvenient, religiously condemned, or outright hunted. In one of the many purges that shaped the modern balance of the surface world, an entire cluster of these clans was driven into the mountains and forced to survive without access to the human societies they had once parasitized.

The initial vampire exiles expected the mountains to be temporary shelter. Instead, they found a landscape already occupied by something far more stable and far more dangerous: the Kingdom of the Ghouls.

Direct conflict was possible, but not strategically viable. The ghuls were numerous and organized, The vampires, while individually powerful, lacked the logistical cohesion to win a sustained war. An uneasy agreement formed between the vampire clans and the ghul hierarchy. Boundaries were established and an uneasy alliance formed.

The vampire settlements are a chain of linked enclaves spread across the upper Katha mountain ranges. Each enclave is controlled by a clan-house. These houses maintain autonomy, but are loosely bound by shared necessity.

Vampire society in the Katha Mountains is aristocratic in structure but practical in survival. The exile condition forced a consolidation of power into clan systems that resemble noble houses more than independent predators.

Each clan is led by an elder bloodline, whose authority is both biological and political. Leadership is maintained through longevity, influence, and internal consensus, though violent succession is not unknown.

Feeding is accommodated through the acquisition of slaves as well as making the occassional hunts down into the settlements nearest the grim mountain slopes.

The ghuls value the vampires because they provide controlled access to surface intelligence, rare goods, and diplomatic channels that would otherwise be inaccessible. The vampires, in turn, rely on ghul stability to maintain the broader security of the mountain region.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DROW

Contact between the vampire clans and the drow is less frequent than their interaction with the ghuls, but significantly more specialized.

The drow value the vampires as intermediaries capable of operating between surface and subterranean political systems. Vampires, in turn, value drow silk production, underground logistical expertise, and access to trade routes that bypass surface restrictions.

These interactions are typically transactional and carefully controlled.

THE COURT OF THE GHOUL KING

One of the most unusual features of vampire-ghul relations is the presence of vampire nobility at the Ghoul King's court.

Despite their differences, vampire emissaries are frequently present at major ghul gatherings, particularly during state feasts, ritual celebrations, and controlled consumption events. These gatherings often take on a form that surface observers would describe as decadent, but within the mountain context function as structured displays of power.

GHULS

For game stats, ghuls use the same statblocks as regular ghouls, but they are more intelligent and cunning, and lack the distinct body odor that gives away the regular variety. Ghuls have no body hair, and their mouths are filled with needle-like fangs that some mistake for vampiric.

PANTHEON

The people of Narseh fear the gods more than they worship them. The powers honored in the temples are ancient, unpredictable beings believed to reward strength, cunning, sacrifice, and devotion, while punishing weakness, disrespect, and broken oaths. Every kingdom maintains its own favored cults and patron deities, but no ruler is foolish enough to ignore the others entirely. Priests and temple astrologers constantly observe omens, dreams, eclipses, animal behavior, and sacrificial rites to determine which powers are restless or displeased. Festivals, blood offerings, and public rituals are common in the cities, where statues of the gods are carried through markets and temple districts beneath incense smoke, chanting, and masked processions intended as much to appease the divine as to honor it.

NEREA, GODDESS OF RAGE AND SUFFERING

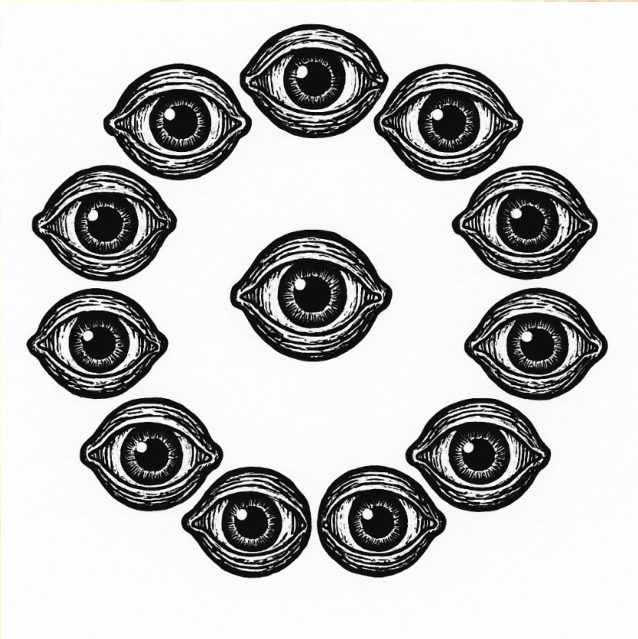
Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A Winged Woman
Queen of Suffering

KABEIRO, DEMON-GOD OF DESPAIR, RAGE, ENVY, AND LUST

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Larva with the face of a human infant
Lord of Empty Spaces and Barren Wombs

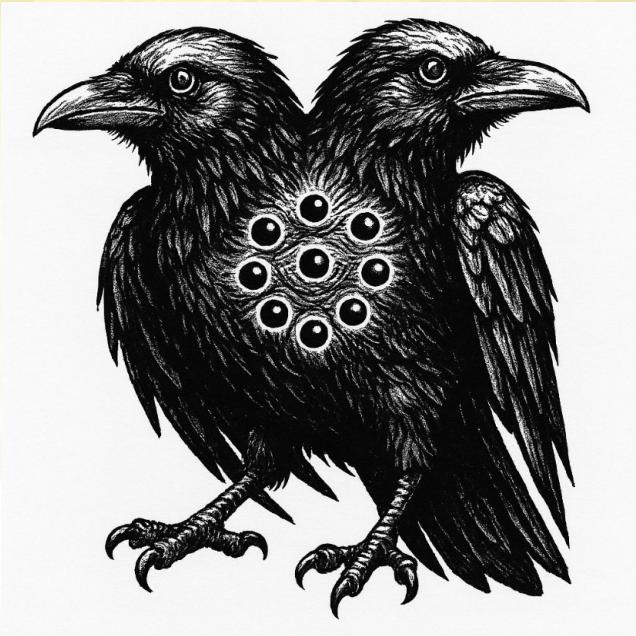
SAMOTH, DEMON-GOD OF MADNESS

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Eleven unblinking eyes set in a circle
The Sleepless One, the Devourer of Sanity, the Laugh in the Darkness



ORPHIC, GOD OF CORPSES

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Two-headed raven
He-Who-Stalks-the-Tombstones, Patron of Funeral Rites



AZAROTH, DEMON-GOD OF RUTHLESS AUTHORITY

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A single eye surrounded by writhing tentacles
Lord of a Thousand Faces, Eater of Children

BASILIUS, GOD OF BATTLES

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A shield with a skull painted on it in blood
The Lord of Trumpets

JUHLA, GOD OF THE WILD

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A jackal
Patron of Feral Things

NPCS

SERENYA VAL-KETH

Serpentwoman

Serenya Val-Keth is a wealthy noble patron and secret high priestess of a hidden cult devoted to Set, the Serpent God imprisoned within the Abyss. Publicly, she is known as a refined socialite and benefactor of scholars, mystics, and foreign antiquities. In truth, Serenya is an ancient serpentwoman who manipulates nobles, merchants, and priests through deception, seduction, and prophecy, slowly expanding her cult's influence while seeking the rites and relics needed to restore Set to the world. For stats, use serpentman.

SISTER THALEIA

4th-level cleric

Sister Thaleia is a wandering priestess of Basilius, the Lord of Trumpets, traveling from battlefield to battlefield across Narseh. Clad in worn mail and carrying a blood-marked shield, she ministers to soldiers, mercenaries, and the dying alike. Thaleia believes war reveals the truest nature of mankind, and her sermons call not for peace, but for courage, discipline, and acceptance of death beneath the gaze of Basilius.

AC 4, **HD** 4 (19hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D11 W12 P14 B16 S15, **STR** 9 **INT** 11 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 13 **CON** 13 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, staff **Spells** *hold person, light (darkness), resist fire*

HIGH PRIEST THEODRAN VHAL

8th-level cleric

High Priest Theodran Vhal is the foremost religious authority in Ardiae, presiding over the vast temple bureaucracy that governs nearly every aspect of civic life. In his sixties, measured and imposing, he serves the entire Narsehan pantheon and interprets omens believed to guide the kingdom's stability. Monarchs, nobles, and magistrates require his sanction to maintain legitimacy, and his judgments on matters of heresy, ritual law, and divine favor carry the weight of state decree.

AC 7, **HD** 8 (21hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 7 **INT** 13 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 9 **CON** 10 **CHA** 14, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, flail, mace, staff

Spells *detect magic, purify food and drink, lightness (darkness), bless (blight), hold person, snake charm, continual light (continual darkness), sticks to snakes, create water, silence 15' radius, commune*

SHELLESTA OF LYRIA

Noblewoman

Lady Shellesta Vaelor of Lyria is a wealthy noblewoman known as much for her beauty and appetite for novelty as for her vast estates. Restless and perpetually bored, she surrounds herself with artists, mercenaries, scholars, and wandering adventurers, favoring a new companion almost weekly. Those who amuse her are richly rewarded. Those who cease to entertain are often dispatched on absurdly dangerous errands, usually for no reason beyond satisfying her curiosity to see whether they survive. For stats use noble.

VORTHUL THE HOLLOW FLAME

Demon

Vorthul the Hollow Flame is an ancient demon believed to predate even the oldest kingdoms of men. It dwells deep beneath the Katha Mountains within a volcanic abyss sealed by forgotten rites and cyclopean stone gates. A secretive cult worships Vorthul through sacrifice, ecstatic trances, and fire rituals, believing the demon whispers forbidden truths

through dreams and smoke. Legends claim entire mountain settlements have vanished after hearing Vorthul's voice echo from beneath the earth.

XYRETH VELUUTHRA

5th-level drow magic-user

Xyreth Veluuthra is a drow magic-user and emissary between the underworld cities and the courts of surface world. Cold, elegant, and unnervingly patient, she specializes in venom alchemy, shadow magic, and the breeding rites of the great silk-spiders. Xyreth serves the priesthood of Lloth with absolute devotion and quietly gathers relics, prophecies, and sacrificial bloodlines believed necessary for the Spider Goddess's eventual return from the Abyss.

AC 9, **HD** 5 (14hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 8 **INT** 17 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 14 **CON** 10 **CHA** 16, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, sling, staff
Spells *darkness, read languages, phantasmal force, dispel magic, water breathing*

DAGNA IRONVEIN

5th-level dwarf fighter

Dagna Ironvein is a veteran dwarven mercenary captain who has fought in caravan wars, border sieges, and monster hunts across Narseh. Broad-shouldered, scarred, and brutally practical, she values coin, reliability, and discipline above politics or honor. Dagna commands a small but respected company of hardened sellswords known for holding impossible positions and completing contracts others abandon, provided payment arrives on time.

AC 7, **HD** 5 (21hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (1d8+2), **THACo** 17 (16 with scimitar), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 9 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 10 **CON** 16 **CHA** 12, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short sword, sword, warhammer **Weapon Specializations** Sword

KASTOR VEYN

4th-level human beastmaster

Kastor Veyn serves as chief beast-master and palace warden to one of Narseh's noble courts. A quiet, watchful man, he commands a pack of highly trained hunting beasts used to patrol walls, gardens, and hidden passages day and night. Intruders fear his animals more than the palace guards themselves, for Kastor's hounds can track a scent for miles, while his great cats are trained to kill without warning.

AC 5, **HD** 4 (15hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6+2), **THACo** 19 (17 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D11 W12 P12 B15 S16, **STR** 17 **INT** 11 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 10 **CON** 16 **CHA** 12, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, mace, short sword

KING GALERIUS: KING OF BAERALLIS

2nd-level human bard

Pampered, corrupt, and cowardly--these are all apt descriptions of King Galerius. He tends to spend most of his time composing terrible poetry and playing a lyre to guests too terrified to cover their ears. When he's not doing either of these past times, he tends to spend time in the arms of his pleasure slaves, of which he has dozens. He leaves the day to day running of his kingdom to Palthon, the Captain of the Baerallis city guard.

AC 10, **HD** 2(9hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THAC0** 19 , **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 12 **INT** 11 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 10 **CON** 16 **CHA** 12, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, mace, sword **Spells** *faerie fire*

KING THRAX: KING OF LYRIA

5th-level thief / 2nd-level human fighter

Third ruler of his dynasty, King Thrax has retained power over the largest of the Narsehan kingdoms by being as ruthless as he is cunning. And as he is cunning, Thrax sees the writing on the wall—and that writing is Karth. Recently, a cabal of treacherous priests poisoned Thrax's only son and crown prince. In retaliation, King Thrax wrote in his will that should he die without an heir, Lyria should be given to Karth. He sent one copy to the priests, another to the Karthan senate, and a sealed copy remains in his chambers. This threat has worked so far to keep the priests from trying to assassinate him... so far.

AC 5, **HD** 7(14hp), **Att** 1 × kopis (1d8+2), **THAC0** 17 (15 with kopis), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P9 B12 S11, **STR** 13 **INT** 11 **WIS** 8 **DEX** 14 **CON** 12 **CHA** 12, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, mace, short bow, sword, two-handed sword, **Weapon Specializations** Kopis

KING BUREBISTA: KING OF AURATARIA

6th-level human cleric

Burebista is the High Priest of Azaroth, the patron god of Aurataria, who is the first of his line, having secured the throne through subterfuge and guile—the Narsehan way. In addition to his cabal of priests working under him, Burebista also employs the various thieves guilds in his lands, using

them as his eyes and ears, and to perform his will to those who would foolishly oppose him.

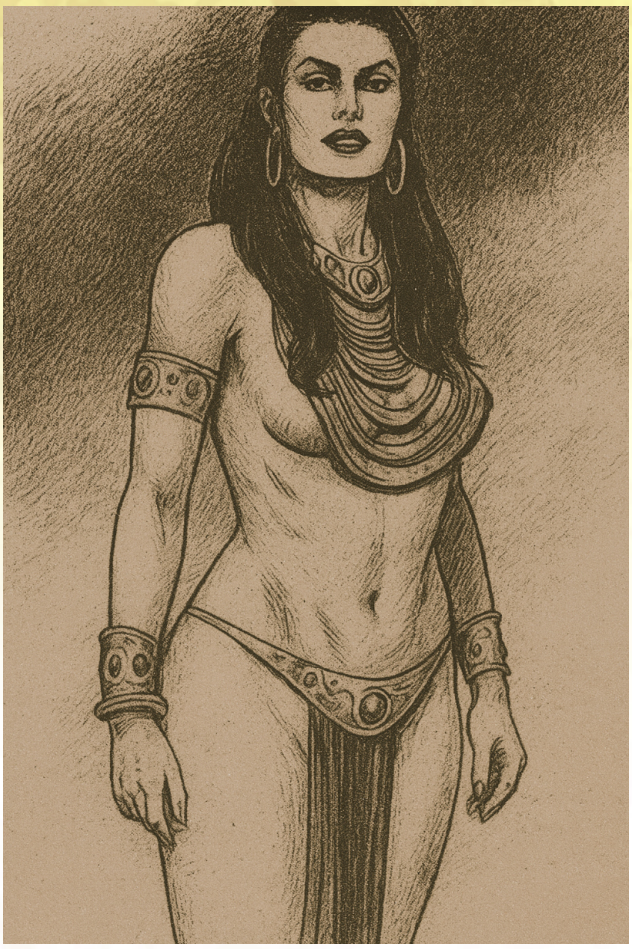
AC 4, **HD** 6 (18hp), **Att** 1 × mace (1d6-1), **THAC0** 17 (18 with mace), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **STR** 7 **INT** 12 **WIS** 4 **DEX** 12 **CON** 12 **CHA** 14, **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, **Spells** *purify food and water, cure light wounds, resist cold, find traps, resist fire, striking,* **Possessions** *scroll of protection from magic*

QUEEN COUTZA: QUEEN OF DARDANYAN

4th-level human cleric / 3rd-level thief

Priestess of Nerea, Queen Coutza came to the throne at age 13, after both of her parents were slain by assassins. The young Coutza turned to the goddess Nerea for vengeance, which she achieved, and now lives in complete devotion to her deity. Coutza to date has refused to take a husband, though she is fond of trysts with the strong adventurers (male or female) she often employs for her many schemes.

AC 10, **HD** 7 (10hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4-1), **THAC0** 17 (18 with staff), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 8 **INT** 13 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 12 **CON** 10 **CHA** 14, **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, **Spells** *cure light wounds, light, hold person,* **Possessions** *ring of controlling humans*



VAELITH MORCANTIR

7th-level elf necromancer

Vaelith Morcantir is an elven necromancer whose fascination with death has carried him far beyond the boundaries of respectable magic. For decades he has studied corpses, spirits, vampires, ghouls, and every known form of undeath. The vampire clans of the Katha Mountains and even the ghul courts permit his presence, regarding him as a rare mortal scholar who seeks understanding rather than conquest. Vaelith views undeath not as a curse, but as the next stage of existence awaiting proper mastery.

AC 9, **HD** 7 (21hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THAC0** 17, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 10 **INT** 15 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 13 **CON** 10 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Spells** *skull speech, chill touch, command undead, spectral hand, detect magic, fear, carrion stench, reassemble,* **Possessions** *wand of fear*

THE LADY VALASHA: ADVENTURER

6th-level elf / 2nd-level magic-user

The Lady Valasha is the estranged child of noble elven parents in the city of Ardiae. Unable to follow in the selfish path of her parents, she left home at a young age, adventuring across the Middle Sea. She recently returned to her home kingdom, taking on tasks to protect the weak.

AC 6, **HD** 8 (21hp), **Att** 1 × short bow (1d6+1), **THAC0** 17 (16 with short bow), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 10 **INT** 14 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 12 **CON** 10 **CHA** 13, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, hand axe, short bow, **Weapon Specializations** Short bow, **Spells** *shield*

BRYNJA FROSTBORN, MERCENARY

5th-level human fighter

The Brynja Frostborn left the frozen fjords of Nordvanir in search of wealth, glory, and enemies worthy of her axe. Towering, red-haired, and unafraid of violence, she has become a respected mercenary across Narseh's cities and caravan routes. Though many mistake her for a brute, Brynja possesses a sharp tactical mind and an iron sense of loyalty. She spends coin freely, drinks heavily, and is always eager for the next dangerous contract.

AC 5, **HD** 5 (32hp), **Att** 1 × broadsword (1d8+1), **THAC0** 17 (16 with broadsword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 11 **INT** 13 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 15 **CON** 15 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, sword, two-handed sword **Weapon Specializations** Broadsword

RASKIN GREYTAIL, WERERAT

Raskin Greytail is the elusive master of one of Narseh's largest thieves' guilds, controlling smuggling routes, fences, informants, and burglars across an entire city. Publicly, he appears as an unremarkable merchant of modest means. In secret, he is a cunning wererat whose network extends into sewers, cellars, and forgotten tunnels beneath the streets. Raskin prefers blackmail and leverage to violence, but those who threaten his organization rarely disappear cleanly. For stats, use wererat.

KING MACIAN THE FOUL: KING OF ARDIAE

King Macian the Foul is a grotesquely obese human of enormous appetites, of all kinds. However, he is also a literal genius, having mastered over 9 languages, with a keen insight into behaviors and motivations, allowing him to instantly size up an adversary and know what they are going to attempt before even they do. King Macian has a large network of spies, not only throughout all of Narseh, but throughout all of the **Middle Sea**. Out of all of the kingdoms of Narseh, his is the least in debt (though his avarice nature prevents him from ever clearing the books entirely). He also has a strong relationship with the banks, as his savvy investment advice has made more than one banking house vast sums of money.

For stats, use noble.

LADY VALESSA DAMARIS

7th-level human magic-user

Lady Valessa Damaris is a powerful magic-user and influential noblewoman whose lavish estates are famous throughout Narseh. Her feasts attract aristocrats, merchants, adventurers, priests, and foreign dignitaries, all drawn by rumors of rare wines, exotic entertainments, and political opportunities. Brilliant, charismatic, and dangerously perceptive, Valessa uses these gatherings to cultivate alliances, gather secrets, and quietly expand her influence far beyond the walls of her own domain.

AC 8, **HD** 7 (20hp), **Att** 1 × *dagger +2* (1d4+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with *dagger +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P9 B12 S10, **STR** 8 **INT** 16 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 13 **CON** 10 **CHA** 16, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Spells** *read magic, light, levitate, wizard lock, clairvoyance, hold person*

PALTHON: CAPTAIN OF THE CITY GUARD OF BAERALLIS

5th-level human fighter

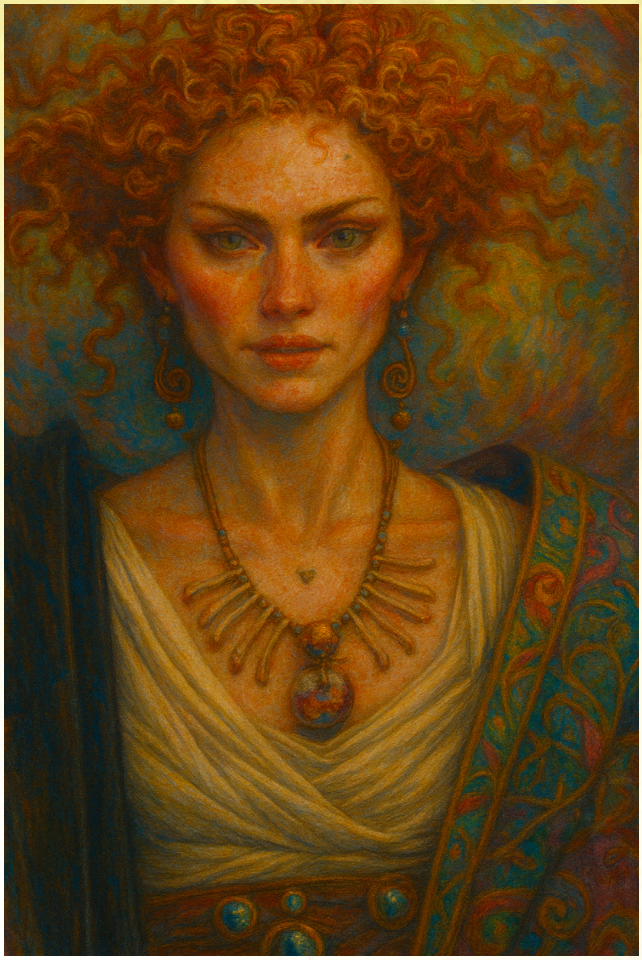
Palthon is the true ruler behind the throne of Baerallis, handling all administrative and executive duties while King Galerius tends to his various vices. Palthon intends to do away with the kind eventually and seat himself on the throne, but his machinations are not yet fully prepared... but soon.

AC 2, **HD** 5 (26hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 12 **WIS** 8 **DEX** 14 **CON** 14 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, hand-axe, short sword **Specializations** short sword

LADY ELYNDRA LARIS, NOBLEWOMAN

Lady Elyndra Vaelaris is the matriarch of one of Narseh's oldest elven houses, having inherited both its titles and its crushing debts after her father's death. Intelligent, disciplined, and relentlessly pragmatic, she devotes every waking hour to preserving her family's influence through careful alliances, trade agreements, and political maneuvering. Though outwardly composed and graceful, Elyndra views nearly every relationship through the lens of survival, knowing a single mistake could ruin her house forever.

For stats, use noble.



GORAS: HIGH PRIEST OF ORCUS

7th-level ghul cleric

Goras the Pale serves as High Priest of Orcus and stands as the only figure in the Kingdom of the Ghouls whose authority rivals that of the Ghoul King himself. Ancient even by ghul standards, he oversees sacrifices, interprets the will of Orcus, and tends the dread rites surrounding the demon Famine. Feared, revered, and utterly ruthless, Goras believes the spread of suffering and death is a sacred duty entrusted to his people. For stats, use a ghast with spells of a 7th-level cleric.

KING OF THE GHOULS

The Ghoul King rules the Kingdom of the Ghouls from deep within the Katha Mountains, a brutal warlord and devout follower of Orcus. A master of blade and bone, he is as feared in the arena as he is in war, preferring to settle disputes and entertain his court through elaborate gladiator games. Slaves, monsters, and condemned captives are forced into his labyrinthine pits, where survival is rare and losers become dinner. For stats, use a ghast with +4 HD.

CAELORN SARR

9th-level human paladin

Caelorn Sarr is a wandering paladin of the old vows, traveling the roads, cities, and ruins of Narseh in an unending campaign against corruption and supernatural evil. Clad in battered armor marked by countless battles, he serves no single kingdom, only his sacred oath. Caelorn is grimly pragmatic, often outnumbered and exhausted, yet relentless in purpose. Where darkness gathers—cult, demon, or undead—he arrives eventually, and rarely leaves it untouched.

AC 1, **HD** 9 (58hp), **Att** 1 × *short sword +3* (1d6+4), **THACo** 14 (10 with *short sword +3*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W10 P9 B12 S10, **STR** 12 **INT** 12 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 16 **CON** 17 **CHA** 16, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, javelin, longbow, short sword, sword, **Weapon Specializations** short sword, **Spells** *detect magic*, **Possessions** *short sword +3, helm of teleportation*

ACAMAS: CAPTAIN OF THE ROYAL GUARD OF LYRIA

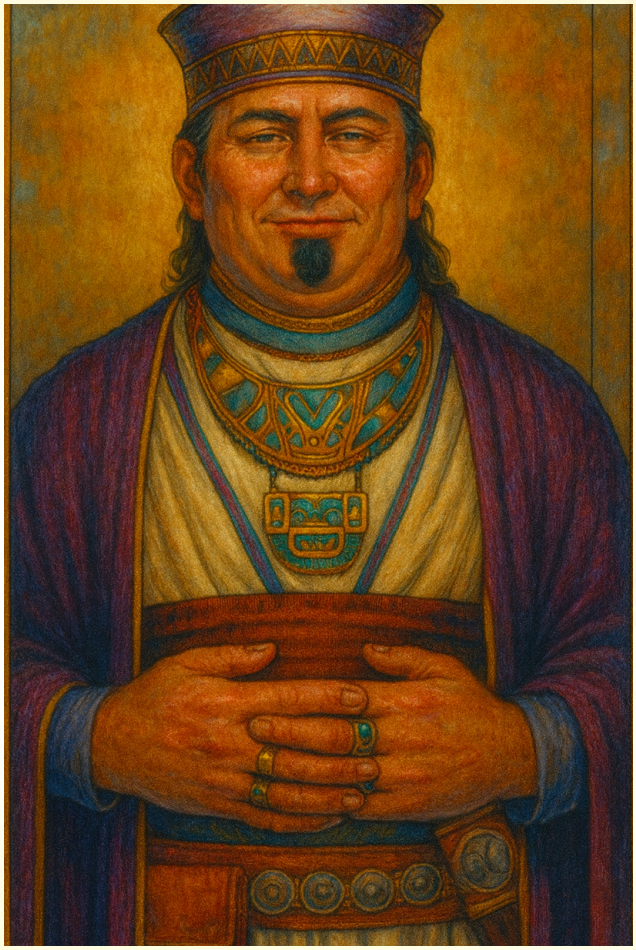
6th-level human fighter

Acamas, son Arianor, is a proud warrior whose code of personal honor is admired by all who know him. He is above corruption, working only toward the safety of his liege, King Thrax, and those of his subjects.

AC 5, **HD** 6 (34hp), **Att** 1 × gladius (1d6+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 16 **INT** 11 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 12 **CON** 15 **CHA** 11, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Short bow, short sword, sword, two-handed sword, **Weapon Specializations** short sword

MARIUS NEXOR

Marius Nexor is one of Narseh's wealthiest merchant magnates, controlling caravans, warehouses, shipping interests, and lending houses across multiple kingdoms. Shrewd, patient, and impeccably dressed, he has amassed a fortune large enough to influence nobles and bankrupt rivals. Though he prefers negotiation to confrontation, Marius is ruthless when protecting his interests. Many rulers command armies, but few possess as much practical power as the man who controls the flow of coin and goods. For stats, use merchant.



SITALKES: EXILED PRINCE OF AURATARIA

7th-level human fighter

Sitalkes is the rightful heir to the throne of Aurataria, his family having been ousted in a successful coup by the treacherous priest (and now reigning king), Burebista. Sitalkes, together with a band of outlaws and adventuerers, seeks a way to regain his throne.

AC 2, **HD** 7 (31hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +1* (1d8+4), **THAC0** 14 (10 with *broadsword +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 17 **INT** 10 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 14 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sword, short bow, **Weapon Specializations** sword,**Possessions** *broadsword +1*

LORD CASSIAN MORVANE: WEREBAT

Lord Cassian Morvane is a minor noble of respectable lineage whose family holdings have steadily declined over the years. Polite, cultured, and seemingly harmless, he spends much of his time attending feasts, salons, and noble gatherings. Few know that beneath this refined exterior he is a werebat who prowls the night skies in search of secrets, blackmail, and prey. His true influence comes not from land or title, but from what he learns in darkness. For stats, use werebat.

MATRON ZILVRA T'SARRIN

10th-level drow cleric

Matron Zilvra T'sarran is the supreme priestess of Vala Vhel-Karaz, one of the great drow cities deep beneath the Katha Mountains. Ruthless, brilliant, and utterly devoted to Lloth, she commands vast temple estates, spider-silk industries, and an extensive network of spies and assassins that reach into surface realms. Her authority rivals that of kings, enforced through terror and devotion. Zilvra views every sacrifice and political maneuver as part of Lloth's eventual return from the Abyss and the restoration of drow supremacy.

AC 2, **HD** 10 (33hp), **Att** 1 × *staff of withering* (1d4), **THACo** 17 (15 with *dagger +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D2 W3 P5 B6 S4, **STR** 8 **INT** 10 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 14 **CON** 12 **CHA** 17, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, staff, war hammer, **Spells** *cure light wounds, protection from evil, purify food and water, detect magic, speak with animals, know alignment, warp wood, hold person, cure blindness, cure disease, growth of animals, cure serious wounds, detect lie, finger of death,* **Possessions** *elven cloaks and boots, staff of withering*

QUEEN NHARZA THE EVER-HUNGRY

Queen Nharza the Ever-Hungry is the consort of the Ghoul King and one of the most feared figures in the Kingdom of the Ghouls. Cunning where her husband is direct, she oversees the royal court, slave markets, and the elaborate feasts for which the kingdom is infamous. Nharza delights in intrigue, manipulation, and cruel entertainments, maintaining a vast network of informants and rivals whose fortunes rise or fall according to her whims.

PRINCESS VELKARA

Princess Velkara is the ambitious daughter of the Ghoul King and Queen Nharza, a young ghul noble already feared for her intelligence and cruelty. Fascinated by politics, poisons, and the intrigues of foreign courts, she frequently entertains visiting drow, vampires, and cultists at her family's mountain stronghold. Velkara openly dreams of one day ruling the kingdom herself and is known to view nearly everyone around her as either a useful tool, a future ally, or a future meal. For stats, use ghast.

LORD VALERIUS DRAKENHOF

Lord Valerius Drakenhof is among the most powerful vampire nobles of the Katha Mountains, ruling a remote fortress hidden among mist-shrouded peaks. Ancient, charismatic, and dangerously intelligent, he has survived centuries through diplomacy as often as predation. Valerius maintains uneasy alliances with the drow and the Kingdom of the Ghouls, frequently appearing at their courts and decadent feasts. Beneath his cultured demeanor lies a patient predator who measures plans in decades rather than years. Use vampire for stats.

TIBBIN GEARWRIGHT

6th-level gnome artificer

Tibbin Gearwright is a gnome artificer whose workshop is packed with experimental devices, half-finished inventions, and mechanisms that probably should not function but somehow do. Equal parts engineer, alchemist, and eccentric genius, he sells everything from ingenious locks and clockwork servants to explosive prototypes of questionable safety. Tibbin's creations have earned him both wealthy patrons and angry creditors, and his enthusiasm for testing new ideas often exceeds his concern for the consequences.

AC 5, **HD** 6 (21hp), **Att** 1 × *staff of withering* (1d4), **THACo** 17 (15 with *dagger +2*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 7 **INT** 14 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 10 **CON** 12 **CHA** 12, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, **Gadgets (***pick 8,* **Middle Sea Core Rulebook)**

MALTHOR KANE

11th-level human sorcerer

Malthor Kane is a reclusive sorcerer whose true age is unknown. Some claim he advised kings centuries ago; others insist he is far older still. Obsessively devoted to lost knowledge, he wanders forgotten ruins, buried necropolises, and the dark realms of the Katha Mountains with unusual freedom. Drow matrons, vampire lords, and even ghul priests tolerate his presence, regarding him as a dangerous but invaluable scholar of ancient secrets best left undisturbed.

AC 8, **HD** 11 (25hp), **Att** 1 × *staff of striking* (1d4-1), **THACo** 14 (15 with *staff of striking*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P8 B11 S8, **STR** 8 **INT** 14 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 9 **CON** 9 **CHA** 12, **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Spells** *snake arrow, burning hands, wall of fog, summon snakes, alter dreams, not this hour, sign of Jhebbal Sag, dance of the cobras, sword of Skelos, dark wings, darkness simulacrum, visions of torment and delight, vomit horror, awful rite of the werebeast, implant demonic essence, dragonshape*, **Possessions** *staff of striking, elemental summoning device (fire), scarab of protection, potion of flying*

UNITS

The five kingdoms of Narseh have the same units in their militaries. The following pages describe the various units found in these lands, along with the amount available to each kingdom.

SKIRMISHERS (Lyria ×60, all others ×30)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (hand axe), 1d4 (javelin)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

SKIRMISHER SWORDSMEN (Lyria ×36, all others ×18)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (broadsword), 1d4 (javelin)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon, Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

SKIRMISHER SWORDSMEN, VETERANS (Lyria ×36, all others ×18)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 200
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (falx), 1d4 (javelin)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged Weapon, Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

MEDIUM SWORDSMEN, VETERANS
(Lyria ×36, all others ×18)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (falx)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

MEDIUM SWORDSMEN, VETERANS
(Lyria ×16, all others ×8)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 200
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (falx)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

SPEARMEN (Lyria ×36, all others ×18)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

CAVALRY (Lyria ×36, all others ×18)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 13
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear), 1d8 (broadsword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Mounted (Light Large)
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2
Light Large vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +3
Light Large vs. Light Foot: +2
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

THESSADONIA

Capital: Pellgai
Demographics: 85% human, 7% half-orc, 3% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% gnome, 1% satyr, 1% other
Notable Settlements: Pellgai (70,000 families; Market Value I), Asiros (60,000 families; Market Value II), Argolis (80,000 families; Market Value I), Rematia (40,000 families; Market Value III), Eleon (30,000 families; Market Value IV), Levkato (50,000 families; Market Value III), The Ruins of Jaresh (0)
Population: 5.5 million people (1.1 million families)
Government: Monarchy
Rulers: King Karanus IV
Annual Treasury: 916,000 pp (roughly 450,000 pp in the royal treasury
Expenses: 800,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Ceramics, pottery, marble, glass, olive oil, wine, slaves
Demand Values: Exotic hides +1, fish -1, glassware +2, grain +1, hides -1, marble -1, olive oil -1, papyrus +1, pork +1, pottery -2, slaves +2, spices +2, textiles +1, tin +1

Beasts of Peril: Aarakocra, axe beak, basilisk, bulette, carrion crawler, centaur, chimera, cloud giant, cyclops, dire wolf, death dog, demons, dogs, eagles, empyreans, ghosts, giant owls, giant rats, giant scorpions, giant sea horses, giant sharks, giant vultures, goats, gorgons, gricks, griffons, harpies, hawks, hell hounds, hook horrors, horses (wild), hydras, medusas, merfolk, minotaurs, mules, nightmares, owls, pegasi, poisonous snakes, rocs, sahaugin, satyrs, shadows, shapechangers (lyncanthropes, dopplegangers), spartaloi, storm giants, thanatonic titans, titans, vampires, wolves, wraiths

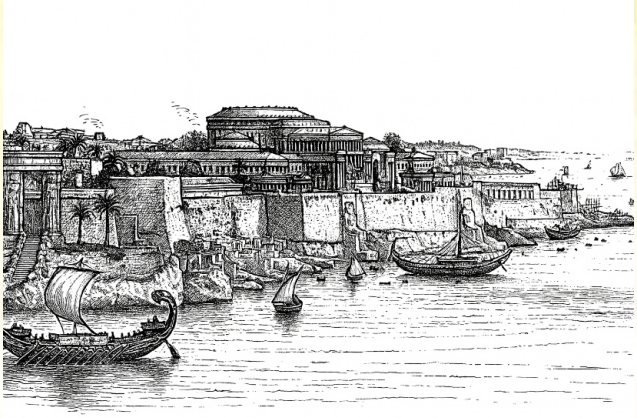
Nestled between the Xelladran peninsula to the east and the treacherous Land of the Thanes to the west, the rugged realm of Thessadonia is impossible to discuss without delving into the history of the great Xelladran city-states.

By around -200 KR, the various human tribes of Xelladra had formed various, independent cities known as *polises*. The *polis* was a city with a centralized government, typically in the form of a council. Each city had its own code of laws, its own recognition of

citizen and foreigner, and its own military, though they all shared the same common gods, the same methods of war, and various other cultural aspects. Though united beneath a single crown, the people of Thessadonia remain fiercely attached to their ancestral cities. A man of Asterion may have little in common with a sailor from Thalassia beyond language, religion, and allegiance to the king. Ancient rivalries persist in trade, politics, athletic competitions, and matters of prestige. While open warfare between the city-states has largely passed into history, few Thessadonians have forgotten the victories, betrayals, and feuds that shaped their ancestors.

These city-states warred amongst themselves for hundreds of years, while simultaneously increasing knowledge in the disciplines of mathematics, spellcraft, the arts, philosophy, deism, wrestling, boxing, and war.

Over time, their ambitions began to expand across the **Middle Sea** in the form of colonies. This brought them into conflict with other cultures, but it also invigorated trade, and expanded their cultural influence.



One of the cultures they ran into was the great southern Empire of Napthia, which was gradually swallowing all of the regions around it, one by one. By 84 KR, Napthia set its sites on Xelladra. For the first time ever, the city-states formed together into a grand coalition, headed by the cities of Daemolis, Akadolis, Katharolis, and Argolis, to repulse the invaders. They are victorious, but at great cost of lives. But this act cements the city-states as a super power, and the socalled Xelladran League was born.

Thessadonian hoplite and Napthian soldier

By 115 KR, Daemolis and Akadolis emerge as the two top powers of the league, and slowly a civil war begins to build. By 120 KR the Xelladran League falls into two halves—one under Daemolis, and one under Akadolis, and war breaks out between the two powers off and on for the next several decades. The hundreds of *polises* under each of their banners, long used to independence, slowly realize that they are, for better or worse, part of two warring empires.

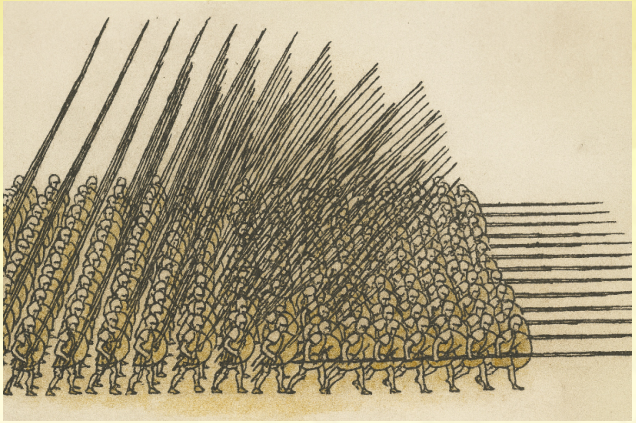
Lands controlled by Napthia at its height.

KING FARDOS OF THESSADONIA

The Thessadonian tribes of the west always considered themselves Xelladran. They shared the same gods and culture, and even fought alongside the Xelladran League during the war with Napthia, but the Xelladrans always viewed them as uncouth and barbaric, and so never granted them entry into the league.

By the year 194 KR, a new king had risen in the citystate of Pellgai. His name was Fardos, and he had a vision. He shared this vision with the other tribes, townships, and city-states of Thessadonia. His powers of persuasion swayed many in joining his banner. And his brilliant tactical mind at warfare persuaded the others.

By the year 200 KR, Fardos had united all of Thessadonia under his rule—but his dream did not stop there. Fardos planned on conquering all of Xelladra. The secret weapon of King Fardos was the phalanx—a solid mass of spears wielded by armored men. With the phalanx, King Fardos invaded Xelladra, and by 220 KR, he had conquered the entire peninsula.



LASSANDROS

In 233 KR, Fardos had a son—Lassandros. He raised him to be a great warrior, and fed him dreams about his vision to invade the Empire of Napthia and exact vengeance for their invasion into their lands all those years ago. But at the age of 15, Lassandros watched his father murdered by a Napthian assassin.

Lassandros was crowned king, and immediately the city-states of Xelladra rebelled. Against the advice of his counselors, King Lassandros led his armies to suppress the rebellions. It took 5 years, but Lassandros won every engagement and reunified his father's empire, and in so doing displayed what would be his enduring legacy—a masterful mind for strategy and tactics, a fearless spirit, and unconquerable prowess for battle.

At age 20, after subduing his subjects and showing them that he was every bit of a warlord as his father had been, Lassandros began making plans for an invasion into Napthia. The following spring, he marched south with nearly 80,000 soldiers.

Four years later, the Napthian Empire ceased to exist, and Lassandros had expanded his empire across modern-day Narseh, Massai, Nethia, and Pharos.

In 263 KR, at the age of 33, Lassandros, like his father, was assassinated by a Napthian sorcerer. Immediately his vast empire fell apart, his generals grabbing land and creating empires for themselves.

They were Thessadonia, Pharos, Massai, and Arkethon. Xelladra and Narseh regained their independence. For the last 249 years, Thessadonia has retained control over its ancestral lands. After Lassandros's death, one of his top generals—a one-eyed half-orc named Gronus One-Eyed—marched with several thousand men to Pellgai and took control. His dynasty lasted for nearly 140 years, until his

descendent, King Nicator, died without an heir, at which time King Karanus I took the throne, establishing the current dynasty.

THE THESSADONIANS

The people of Thessadonia are renowned throughout the known world for their curiosity, ambition, and fierce civic pride. Merchants, philosophers, athletes, soldiers, sailors, and spellcasters from the kingdom can be found in nearly every major port and court from Karth to Axumar.

Though united beneath the rule of King Karanus IV, Thessadonians continue to identify strongly with their ancestral cities. A citizen of Pellgai may spend his entire life arguing that his city produces the finest statesmen in the kingdom, while an Argolian might insist that no other city has ever produced soldiers worthy of comparison. Such rivalries are generally friendly, though centuries of warfare and competition have ensured that old grudges are not easily forgotten.

Education is highly valued among the upper and middle classes. Literacy rates are among the highest in the known world, and public debates on philosophy, politics, religion, military theory, and magic are common in the larger cities. It is not unusual for craftsmen, merchants, and soldiers to possess at least a basic understanding of history, rhetoric, and mathematics.

The Thessadonians admire excellence in all pursuits. Athletic competitions draw enormous crowds, and victorious wrestlers, runners, boxers, and charioteers may achieve fame throughout the kingdom. Poets, philosophers, generals, and adventurers are likewise celebrated, particularly those whose accomplishments bring prestige to their home city.

Most Thessadonians live in farming villages, olive groves, vineyards, and fishing communities scattered across the countryside. These common folk are generally practical and hardworking, but they remain deeply influenced by the legends of the heroic age. Tales of titan wars, dragon slayers, sorcerer-kings, and monster hunters are recited around hearth fires throughout the kingdom.

Unlike many legends elsewhere in the world, however, such stories are often based upon real events. The ruins of forgotten cities, the lairs of cyclopes, and the tombs of ancient heroes can still be found throughout Thessadonia.

Religion occupies an important place in daily life, though Thessadonians are often more comfortable questioning the nature of the gods than many other cultures. Philosophers and priests have debated theology for centuries, producing countless schools of thought regarding fate, virtue, magic, and the divine. Nevertheless, few Thessadonians doubt the existence of the gods themselves. The gods are visible forces in the world, and their favor or wrath can shape the destiny of kingdoms.

Foreigners often describe Thessadonians as proud, argumentative, and endlessly competitive. Thessadonians generally consider these observations compliments.

Civic Identity and the Polis Legacy

Thessadonia is a unified kingdom in law, but in practice it remains a civilization of cities. The ancient *polises* were never fully erased by conquest or decree; they were layered beneath the monarchy rather than replaced by it. As a result, most Thessadonians still define themselves first by their city of origin.

A citizen of Argolis is an Argolian before they are a Thessadonian. A sailor from Levkato carries the reputation of Levkatan shipwrights before he carries loyalty to the crown. Even in royal service, identity is filtered through civic heritage, and this shapes everything from dialect and dress to honor culture and insult.

City rivalry is constant and socially accepted. Argolians boast of military discipline, Pellgaians of political sophistication, Asirans of trade mastery, Rematians of philosophy, and Eleonians of religious favor. These rivalries rarely erupt into open conflict under the monarchy, but they persist in commerce, athletic competition, legal disputes, and patronage networks.

Public festivals often reinforce these divisions rather than erase them. Victories in games or war are attributed to the glory of individual cities as much as to the kingdom as a whole. Even royal proclamations must carefully balance civic pride to avoid unrest.

The monarchy rests upon this older foundation rather than replacing it. Thessadonia is not a nation that absorbed its cities, but a crown that was placed over them.

Competing City Traditions and Regional Character

Each major Thessadonian city preserves a distinct civic tradition shaped by its pre-imperial history. These traditions function as living institutions rather than historical memory.

Some cities are dominated by maritime guilds and colonial ambitions, maintaining fleets that rival small kingdoms. Others preserve strict hoplite traditions where citizenship is tied directly to military service. Certain cities are governed in practice by philosophical councils where rhetoric determines law. Others are controlled by temple authorities who interpret divine will as civic policy.

Magical academies exist across several cities, but no unified doctrine governs their study. Each academy develops its own classification of monsters, ley lines, celestial influence, and arcane theory. Rival institutions often reject each other's frameworks entirely, leading to intellectual disputes that can escalate into political crises or city-level schisms. Up close, it is a federation of competing civic identities bound together by necessity, history, and shared language.

PHILOSOPHY & MAGIC

Thessadonia is one of the most intellectually active regions in the known world. Its scholars are both students of knowledge and participants in ongoing disputes over the nature of reality itself.

Philosophers attempt to systematize the supernatural world. Magic, in their view, is not purely divine nor entirely chaotic, but subject to principles that can be observed, debated, and refined. Competing schools propose conflicting models of how enchantment functions, how monsters originate, and how ley lines interact with mortal perception.

These disagreements are not confined to academia. Philosophical schools are often tied to specific cities, patron families, or political factions. A dispute over the classification of a single phenomenon may trigger diplomatic tension between cities or influence royal policy.

Magical academies are therefore centers of prestige and influence, competing for students, patronage, and access to dangerous knowledge. Expeditions into ruins, monster territories, and ancient sites are as much about proving theoretical models as they are about acquiring treasure.

HERO CULTS

Heroes are present in civic life through cults, shrines, and contested relics that carry real political weight.

Hero cults venerate mortals who achieved extraordinary deeds: dragon slayers, city founders, monster hunters, sorcerer-kings, and demigods. These cults maintain temples, organize festivals, and preserve relics that are believed to retain power or divine favor.

Control of a hero's remains or sacred artifacts is often a matter of civic pride and political leverage. Cities dispute ownership of tombs, weapons, and sanctified sites. Some of the oldest rivalries in Thessadonia center not on land or trade, but on the legacy of a single hero whose deeds predate the monarchy itself.

These traditions originate in the Age of Heroes, a period in which titanic beings, cyclopes, hydras, sea monsters, and other ancient entities shaped the world. Heroes rose in response to these forces, carving out the foundations of civilization.

Evidence of this age persists throughout Thessadonia. Ruins of impossible scale, ancient fortresses built into mountains, sealed burial complexes, and dormant magical sites confirm that the stories are not purely symbolic.

THE SEA & MARITIME POWER

The sea defines Thessadonia as much as its cities do. Coastal geography and centuries of expansion have produced a civilization oriented outward across the waters of the **Middle Sea**.

Trade routes connect Thessadonia to distant powers including Karth, Ecabatana, Axumar, and beyond. Merchant fleets move constantly between ports, carrying goods, scholars, mercenaries, and influence. Naval power is not centralized in a single doctrine but distributed among cities with strong maritime traditions.

Beyond the mainland lie colonies, island holdings, and former outposts of earlier expansion. Some remain loyal to Thessadonia, others function as semi-independent polities, and others have fallen under foreign influence or piracy. Many islands are only partially charted or deliberately avoided due to monsters, curses, or ancient ruins.

The sea itself is dangerous. Storm patterns shift unpredictably near ley-line intersections, sea monsters are not uncommon, and some waters are said to be haunted by remnants of the heroic age. Navigation requires skill, ritual, and local knowledge, and even experienced captains treat certain routes with caution.

PEOPLES OF THESSADONIA

Thessadonia is a human-majority kingdom, but its civilization incorporates numerous peoples who have been part of its history for centuries.

Dwarves hold fortified mountain citadels and control key mining and metallurgical regions. Their alliances are often tied to specific cities rather than the monarchy as a whole, creating long-standing regional dependencies.

Elven communities preserve ancient traditions of philosophy, magic, and art. Some serve as integrated citizens within major cities, while others remain semi-isolated in enclaves that predate the current kingdom.

Satyrs are associated with rural districts, sacred groves, and seasonal rites. They often act as cultural intermediaries between urban civilization and older wilderness traditions.

Centaur groups inhabit frontier regions and highlands, maintaining semi-nomadic lifestyles and distinct codes of honor that predate Thessadonian unification.

Minotaurs live on several islands and coastal regions where they have developed maritime and martial traditions. Though often regarded as mythic in foreign accounts, within Thessadonia they are recognized as established peoples with their own civic identities.

VISITING A CITY IN THESSADONIA

Foreign adventurers are a common sight in Thessadonian cities. Mercenaries, philosophers, treasure seekers, monster hunters, and exiles arrive daily through sea gates and overland roads. While the kingdom is unified under King Karanus IV, each city retains its own customs regarding entry, residence, commerce, and law.

Most cities are approached either by sea or via well-guarded land roads that pass through old civic gates dating back to the age of the polises. Harbor cities maintain strict inspection procedures at dockside customs houses where cargo, weapons, and identities are recorded. Overland travelers are typically questioned at gatehouses controlled by city levies or royal inspectors.

Foreigners are expected to declare their purpose. Common classifications include merchant, pilgrim, mercenary, scholar, envoy, or adventurer. Adventurers are rarely turned away, but may be marked for additional scrutiny depending on current political tensions or religious conditions.

Weapons are usually permitted within city walls, though large arms, siege equipment, and overtly magical artifacts may require registration or temporary sealing by civic authorities.

LAW AND ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement is carried out through a layered system of city guards, royal agents, and civic magistrates. Each city maintains its own guard corps, often composed of locally recruited soldiers who take pride in their civic identity. These forces are responsible for patrols, gate control, market supervision, and the suppression of street violence.

Above them, royal officials oversee matters of interstate crime, treason, cult activity, and violations of kingdom-wide decree. In practice, authority is often shared, negotiated, or contested between city and crown depending on local conditions.

Punishment varies by city but generally includes fines, forced labor, exile, or imprisonment. Some cities maintain deep subterranean detention complexes beneath civic buildings, while others rely on fortified towers, temple confinement, or remote penal colonies on offshore islands. Execution is rare in most regions but not unknown, particularly in cases involving sacrilege, piracy, or political assassination.

Accommodation and Lodging

Cities provide a wide range of lodging depending on wealth and status. Foreign adventurers typically stay in designated inns located near harbor districts, gate quarters, or mercantile zones. These establishments range from simple boarding houses offering shared rooms and basic meals to heavily guarded mercenary lodges catering to armed professionals.

In wealthier cities, patronage systems are common. Wealthy citizens, guilds, or even philosophical schools may sponsor visitors whose skills are of interest. Such arrangements often come with obligations, including service, investigation, or participation in civic disputes.

Temples also provide lodging for pilgrims and those under divine protection. These sanctuaries are considered politically neutral, though local priests may still exert significant influence over guests.

Commerce, Arms & Equipment

Thessadonian cities are major commercial centers, and adventurers will find a wide range of goods available in public markets, guild halls, and specialized districts.

Weapons and armor are widely manufactured within the kingdom, particularly in cities with strong hoplite traditions or metallurgical guilds. Bronze and iron arms are common, while higher-quality steel weapons are typically produced in mountain or dwarven-influenced regions. Armor is often custom-fitted, and reputable armories maintain records of their clients.

Sale of weapons is legal in most cities, though certain restrictions apply during festivals, political unrest, or religious observances. Foreign-made arms may be subject to tariffs or inspection, especially if they originate from rival powers such as Karth or Ecabatana.

Magic items are regulated more carefully. While minor enchanted goods circulate through legitimate trade networks, more powerful artifacts are typically controlled by temples, academies, or royal authorities. Unauthorized possession of significant magical relics can result in confiscation, interrogation, or forced transfer to scholarly institutions.

Adventurers in the City

Adventurers are treated with a mixture of suspicion and opportunity. Their skills are valuable, but their reputations for violence and unpredictability make them difficult to fully integrate into civic structures.

Cities frequently employ adventurers for tasks involving ruins, monster threats, cult investigations, maritime exploration, and political deniability. Contracts are typically issued through guilds, magistrates, or private patrons.

However, adventurers who violate civic law, disturb public order, or become entangled in city rivalries may find themselves subject to rapid and uncompromising legal action. In Thessadonia, reputation is as important as law, and a party known for success in dangerous work may be treated very differently from one associated with disorder or sacrilege.

HOPLITES

Thessadonia, like all of Xelladran culture, is a culture built upon warfare. The synonymous word for “warrior” in this culture is the hoplite. A hoplite is an armored warrior who carries a round shield called a hoplon.

These soldiers are drafted in regional levies, commanded by their own aristocrats. The soldiers from these cities and towns paint their region’s emblem on their shield, taking great pride in their places of birth.

Officers are trained in nationally run officer schools, and are attended by the sons of the upper-class nobility. Those exhibiting talents for the magical arts are sent to the College of War Mages in Pellgai. Even slaves, if young enough, are given their freedom and sent to the college in order to keep the number of war mages in the army as high as possible.

The training of the hoplites remains the same as it did in King Fardos’s day. King Fardos reformed the army, emphasizing discipline, better training, and better equipment. To increase its mobility, he imited 1 servant for every 10 soldiers and forced his armies to march 30 miles a day in full armor and provisions. He also imposed a strict sense of strength and masculinity, holding boxing and wrestling competitions, and forbidding items of no practical use, or that promoted comfort. One story tells of a high-ranking general being stripped of command for taking a warm bath, citing it a waste of fuel and a promotion of an effeminate spirit.

THE LAND OF THE THANES

Beyond the rugged western hills of Thessadonia lies the foreboding Land of the Thanes, a constant source of plunderers, raiders, and pillagers. Young Thessadonian soldiers are stationed here along the great expanse in frontier forts, and most see combat within their first six months. The Thanes use the young Thessadonians to train their young in every bit the same fashion, and so skirmishes are common.

On the other hand, so is trading. Thessadonian merchants travel into Thanic territory to trade often, and some Thanic traders (mostly orc or goblin) do so as well—though the Thanes are never allowed beyond plying their business in the frontier towns that have sprung up around the forts.

THE RUINS OF JARESH: CITY OF 1,000 COLUMNS

The legendary ancestral home of the people of Karth, the city of Jaresh was once a magnificent center of learning and prosperity but now lies a shattered, haunted ruin. The city that once housed over 200,000 souls now lies desolate and abandoned, its bones scattered across miles of silent countryside. Its ruins include a hippodrome; two large temples dedicated to Eshua and Etemis respectively; a forum surrounded by an intricately worked colonnade; paved streets; two theaters; two large bathhouses; several smaller temples; and countless other buildings and structures, many only partly standing. The entire area is surrounded by a 20-foot-tall wall, crumbled in many areas. The ruins, locals claim, are haunted, and all manner of strange and deadly beasts have made the ruins home since the city's death. Rumor has it that an ancient and powerful medusa, Callidora, has claimed a large part of the city for herself, and that she has already begun a collection of stone statues made up of foolhardy adventurers and curious passersby.

PANTHEON

The Thessadonians revere the gods as powerful patrons of civilization, wisdom, war, the sea, and the countless forces that govern mortal life. Unlike many cultures, they do not view devotion and inquiry as opposing ideals; a citizen may offer sacrifices at a temple in the morning and spend the afternoon debating the nature of the gods in a public forum. Every city maintains shrines and temples dedicated to its favored deities, though the major gods of the pantheon are honored throughout the kingdom. Priests, philosophers, and oracles interpret dreams, celestial events, sacred flames, unusual animal behavior, and prophetic visions in an effort to understand divine will. Religious festivals are among the grandest public spectacles in Thessadonia, filling streets with athletic competitions, dramatic performances, sacrifices, processions, and civic celebrations. Yet beneath the pageantry lies a deeply held belief that the gods remain active participants in mortal affairs. Their favor can bring prosperity, victory, and inspiration, while their anger may unleash storms, plagues, monstrous births, or the downfall of entire cities.

ESHUA, GOD OF THE SKY

Alignment: Neutral

Symbol: A Fistful of Lightning Bolts

King of the Xelladran and Thessadonian gods

ETEMIS, GODDESS OF HUNTING AND CHILDBIRTH

Alignment: Lawful

Symbol: Bow and Arrow on Lunar Disc

Daughter of Eshua

DAPHOSINIS, GODDESS OF LOVE AND BEAUTY

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Sea Shell
Daughter of Eshua

PELLON, GOD OF LIGHT, MUSIC, AND HEALING

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Lyre
Son of Eshua

RESH, GOD OF WAR, VIOLENCE, AND STRIFE

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Spear and Hoplon Shield
Son of Eshua

AKATHANA, GODDESS OF WISDOM, CIVILIZATION, AND STRATEGIC WARFARE

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Owl
Twin of Resh

RHENA, GODDESS OF MARRIAGE, INTRIGUE, AND LIES

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Fan of Peacock Feathers
Wife of Eshua, Mother of the Gods

HATON, GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD, THE DEAD, TREASURE, AND DUNGEONS

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Black Ram
Brother of Eshua

HEKANA, GODDESS OF MAGIC AND THE MOON

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: The Setting Moon
Sister of Eshua

NETHEIDON, GOD OF THE SEA AND EARTHQUAKES

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Trident
Brother of Eshua

NPCS

KING KARAMUS IV: KING OF THESSADONIA

9th-level human fighter

King Karanus is a practical man, and a true Thessadonian in mind and spirit. He believes in the divine providence of his kingdom, and like all Thessadonian kings for the past 249 years, dreams of a day when all of Lassandros's Successor Kingdoms are united again under the Thessadonian banner.

He mistrusts—and rightly so—the Karthan Republic's expansions, especially their rule of the Xelladran homeland. His father, King Karamus III, had put a stop to their expansion after they conquered the city-states, but never pressed the attack further to drive them back

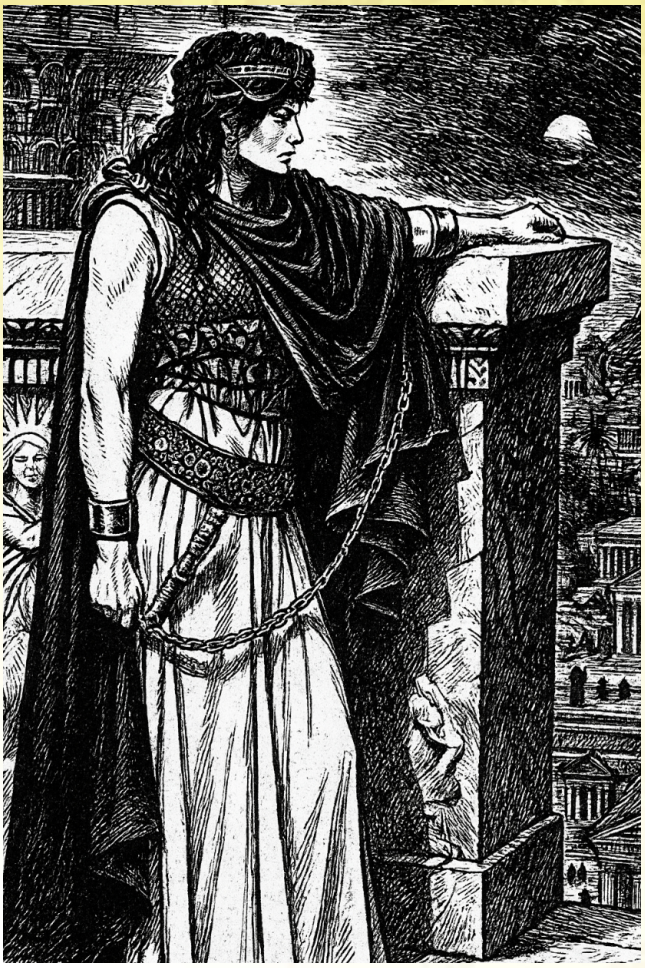
to their own peninsula. This is something King Karamus IV has long considered remedying.

AC 3, **HD** 9 (54hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +2* (1d8+5), **THACo** 14 (9 with *broadsword +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D4 W6 P5 B6 S8, **STR** 16 **INT** 14 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 12 **CON** 16 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, polearm, short sword, sword, sling, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *muscle cuirass +1, xiphos +2, broadsword +2*

QUEEN THALESSA

Queen Thalessa is a calculating and politically astute consort, widely regarded as the stabilizing force behind the royal household. A native of Argolis, she is known for her disciplined intellect and quiet influence over court affairs. Though outwardly supportive of King Karanus IV's vision of reuniting the Xelladran successor kingdoms, she is more cautious in practice, favoring consolidation of internal power.

For stats use noble.



PRINCESS XANTHE

4th-level human fighter

The youngest daughter of King Karamus IV, Xanthe traded palace luxuries for the brutal discipline of the phalanx. She refuses a comfortable marriage, vowing her hand only to someone who can disarm her in a duel. On the battlefield, her spear is an extension of her own arm, striking with the lethal precision of Athena herself. She seeks glory in dark dungeons to prove she is her father's true heir.

AC 5, **HD** 4 (24hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with spear), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 9 **INT** 11 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 15 **CON** 13 **CHA** 12, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, sling, spear, sword, **Specializations** Spear

PRINCE LYCURGUS

4th-level human fighter

Prince Lycurgus became inheritor of the crown after his older brother, Prince Karamus V, died of the plague three years ago. Now the eldest son of King Karamus IV, Lycurgus is a consummate tactician who prefers the silver tongue of diplomacy to the bloody spear. Yet, when war demands it, he fights with a ruthless, calculated ferocity. He bears the heavy burden of the crown's future, constantly balancing his loyalty to his sister's martial ambitions with the pragmatic, often cutthroat politics required to keep the kingdom from fracturing.

AC 4, **HD** 4 (28hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with spear), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 12 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, sling, spear, sword, **Specializations** Spear

THERON OF THE SUN-SCORCHED ISLES

8th-level human paladin

Scion of a ruined noble house, Theron carries a blade forged in the fires of a fallen star. He wanders the hinterlands as a sworn enemy of the chthonic horrors that plague the mortal realms. Guided by omens and the favor of the gods, he tracks hydras and gorgons and other dangers with a group of fearless warriors. He seeks neither gold nor crown, only the satisfaction of a monster's dying breath and a land finally cleared of shadows.

AC 4, **HD** 8 (51hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +2, flaming* (1d8+4), **THAC0** 14 (10 with *broadsword +2, flaming*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D5 W6 P7 B7 S9, **STR** 13 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 14 **CON** 13 **CHA** 12, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *ring of protection, broadsword +2 (flaming), shield +2,* **Abilities** Holy resistance, turning the undead, laying on hands: 1/day, heal 2 HP per level; from 5th level, cure disease 1/week by laying on hands

LADY AGLAIA OF THE SILK COURT

Renowned for her lavish symposia, Aglaia is the picture of aristocratic poise. Beneath her charming hospitality lies a venomous ambition. Viewing the current king as a relic, she privately schemes with the Karthan Republic to orchestrate a coup. Her endgame is absolute: seat her own children on the throne, secure a prosperous peace with the Republic, and subtly reshape the kingdom's future from the comfort of the shadows. For stats use noble.

STILLBORN

7th-level tiefling

Cursed with a crooked body, the creature known only as Stillborn is just as twisted in mind. Following ancient traditions, King Karanus IV, upon looking at the premature, twisted form of his firstborn male child, left it out in the wild to die from the elements, telling his queen that the baby was stillborn. But Stillborn did not die. He was rescued by an exiled Napthian elven witch named Vaythra the Crone, infused with a demonic essence, and raised in the wilderness. Though bent and crippled, Stillborn still became a powerful warrior and spellcaster, and now commands a large following of rogues,

mercenaries, Thanes, pirates, and other foul beings. He is hatching plans in the dark to take the throne of Thessadonia, and it was by his scheming that Prince Karanus V died of the plague.

AC 5, **HD** 7 (23hp), **Att** 1 × *kopis +1* (1d8+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with *kopis +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D9 W10 P10 B13 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 14 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 8 **CON** 8 **CHA** 10, **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, sword, two-handed sword, **Possessions** *kopis +1, potion of control animal, potion of growth, potion of invisibility, potion of polymorph self, ring of controlling plants,* **Abilities** Beguile 56%, Hear Noise 1-4, Hide in Shadows 45%, Move Silently 55%

QUEEN XYRA BLOODWING: HARPY

Harpy Queen Xyra Bloodwing rules a sprawling aerie hidden among the sea cliffs and storm-lashed islands west of Thessadonia. Cunning, vain, and utterly ruthless, she has united dozens of rival harpy flocks through a mixture of fear, charisma, and carefully arranged alliances. Merchant captains curse her name, for her raiders descend without warning upon isolated vessels and coastal settlements. Unlike most harpies, Xyra possesses a keen understanding of politics and trade, often negotiating with pirates, smugglers, and even corrupt city officials when it serves her interests. Her ambition is nothing less than dominion over the western seas.

For stats, use harpy.

CALLIDORA

Callidora, the Gorgon Queen of Jaresh, rules from a shattered palace at the heart of the ruined city. Ancient beyond mortal reckoning, she surrounds herself with petrified statues of heroes, kings, and would-be dragon slayers who sought her death. Unlike most medusas, Callidora is patient and calculating, preferring manipulation to slaughter. Many believe she knows secrets dating back to the Age of Heroes and guards treasures buried beneath the fallen streets of Jaresh. For stats use medusa.

UNITS

Though united beneath a single crown, Thessadonia's military remains heavily influenced by the traditions of its ancient city-states. Different regions favor different methods of warfare, with some renowned for disciplined hoplite formations, others for skilled sailors, cavalry, archers, or elite guards. The following pages describe the various military units fielded throughout the kingdom, along with the numbers available to the crown in times of war.

SKIRMISHERS (×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (javelin)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

ARCHERS (×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short bow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

HOPLITES (×360)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Heavy Foot
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Offensive Spear, Defensive Spear
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See Spearmen in **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook**

CAVALRY (×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Offensive Spear, Defensive Spear
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See Spearmen in **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook**

WAR MAGES (×15)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 4
TOTAL HD: 400
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (falcata)
QUALITY: Elite
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen, Spellcasters
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

MASSAI

Capital: Massa
Demographics: 65% human, 20% elf, 10% dragonborn, 3% half-orc, 1% gnome, 1% other
Notable Settlements: Massa (90,000 families; Market Value I), Xarra (80,000 families; Market Value I), Akko (60,000 families; Market Value II), Radda (40,000 families; Market Value III)
Population: 6.95 million people (1.39 million families)
Government: Empire
Rulers: Emperor Theatus
Annual Treasury: 1,100,000 pp (roughly 100,000 pp in the royal treasury
Expenses: 975,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Fruit, textiles, metalworks, slaves
Demand Values: Exotic hides +1, fish -1, grain +1, hides -1, olive oil +1, papyrus textiles-1, wool -2

Beasts of Peril: Androsphinx, bulette, camels, chimera, cyclops, dragon turtle, dust mephit, earth elemental, efreet, elephant, ghast, ghoul, giant centipede, giant hyena, guardian naga, giant poisonous snake, gynosphinx, hill giant, hunter shark, jackalwere, lamia, lion, manticore, marid, stone giant, vampire, wraith

Massai is the traditional homeland of the now defunct Napthian Empire. Massa was the capital, and after the death of Lassandros the Conqueror, one of his generals—the gnome Baracleus—took over Massa and declared himself Satrap. Baracleus's dynasty lasted 80 years, until his death, at which point his top general, the human Leukos, took over, establishing the current dynasty.

Today, Massai is an empire struggling with Narsehan raids from the west, pirate attacks along the coasts, a slowly expanding Empire of Nethia to the east, and internal corruption and beuracratic waste from within. In short, it is an empire on the verge of collapse.

Long before the arrival of Lassandros and his conquering armies, the lands of Massai formed the heart of the Napthian Empire. The Napthians built colossal monuments, vast irrigation networks, and cities whose wealth was legendary throughout the world. Their priests studied the heavens, their scribes recorded centuries of history, and their kings ruled as

living intermediaries between gods and mortals.

Though the empire itself fell centuries ago, its influence remains visible everywhere. Massive temples dominate city skylines. Ancient canals still nourish fertile farmland. Tombs of forgotten pharaohs lie hidden beneath deserts and mountains. Thousands of administrative customs, laws, and traditions survive from Napthian times.

The ruling Leukid dynasty claims descent from Lassandros's conquerors, but many of their subjects still view themselves as Napthian first and Massaii second. This divide continues to shape politics throughout the empire.

GOVERNMENT & SOCIETY

Massai is a land of contradictions. It is at once an ancient civilization and one of the youngest empires. Beneath its current rulers lies the immense shadow of Napthia, whose kings ruled these lands for thousands of years before the coming of Lassandros the Conqueror. Though centuries have passed since the conquest, the people of Massai still live amidst Napthian temples, Napthian canals, Napthian tombs, and Napthian monuments. The empire's rulers may speak of Lassandros and his successors, but many common citizens regard the conquerors as merely the latest dynasty to sit upon an ancient throne.

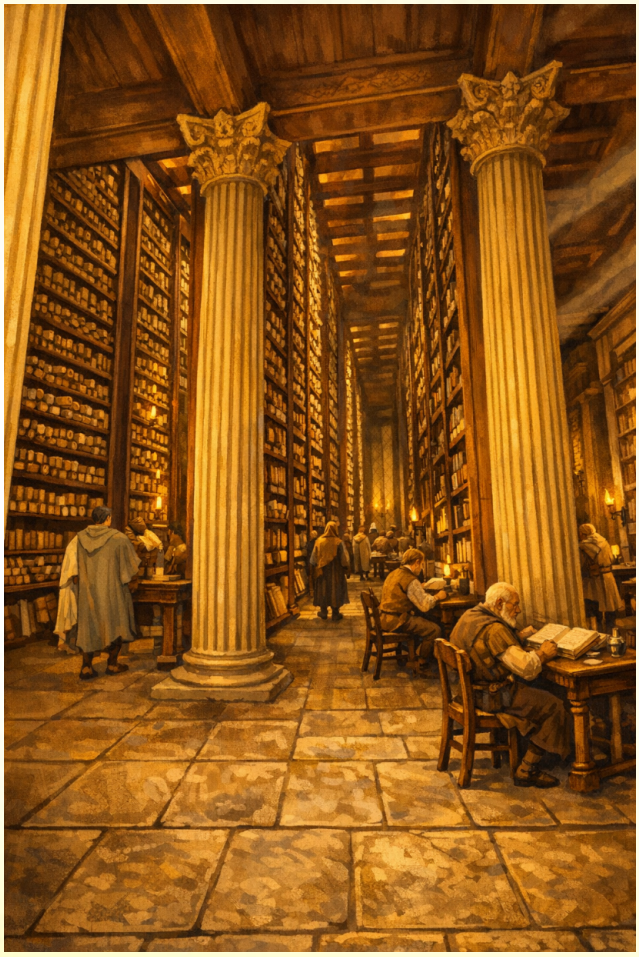
The empire is ruled by the Leukid Dynasty from the city of Massa. In theory, all authority flows from the Emperor, who governs through an immense bureaucracy of satraps, governors, magistrates, tax collectors, military commanders, and temple officials. In practice, the empire's vast size makes centralized control difficult. Provincial governors often rule their territories as personal fiefdoms, noble families maintain private armies, and corruption is so commonplace that many citizens consider bribery a normal part of government. Massai is divided into numerous satrapies, each governed by a satrap appointed by the Emperor. These satraps are expected to collect taxes, maintain roads, administer justice, and raise soldiers when required. Some perform these duties faithfully. Others spend their time enriching themselves while ignoring imperial decrees. Entire provinces may go years without meaningful oversight from Massa, particularly in remote regions near the frontiers. More on the satrapies later in this chapter The empire's population is extraordinarily diverse. Humans make up the majority, but virtually every civilized race can be found within its borders. Centuries of conquest, migration, trade, and colonization have created a society where dozens of languages, customs, and faiths coexist uneasily. Human nobles dine beside dwarven merchants, elven scholars advise imperial governors, and gnomish bureaucrats occupy countless administrative positions throughout the empire.

The descendants of Lassandros's settlers form the empire's political and military elite. They dominate the officer corps, own much of the wealthiest land, and control many important government positions. Yet they remain a minority in many provinces. Local populations often preserve older Napthian traditions, creating a cultural divide that has never fully disappeared.

Massai's cities are among the largest and wealthiest in the world. Their streets are crowded with merchants, philosophers, priests, laborers, slaves, foreign envoys, mercenaries, and adventurers.

Great libraries preserve knowledge gathered from across the known world. Vast marketplaces sell goods imported from every corner of the continent. Temples dedicated to dozens of gods compete for worshippers, donations, and political influence.

Learning is highly respected, particularly among the upper classes. Wealthy families often employ tutors in philosophy, rhetoric, mathematics, history, astronomy, and magic. Scholars travel freely between the empire's great cities, exchanging theories and preserving knowledge from both Napthian and Xelladran traditions. Many of the world's most respected physicians, astronomers, engineers, and wizards are trained in Massai.

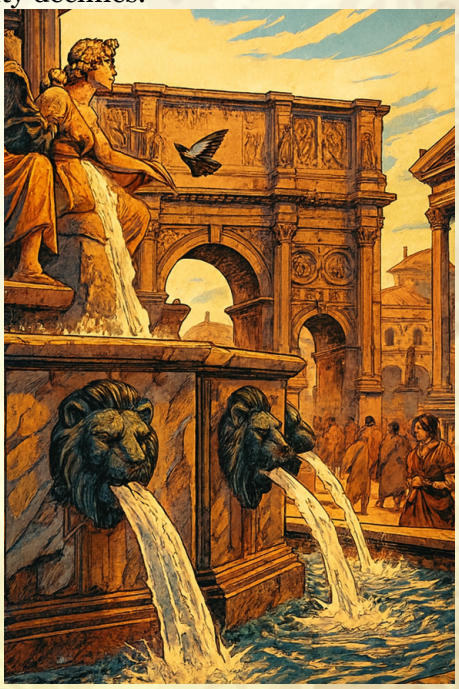


At the same time, the empire possesses a reputation for decadence. The wealth flowing through its cities has created a culture of luxury unknown in most other lands. Noble households maintain lavish estates staffed by dozens of servants and slaves. Public festivals can last for days. Exotic foods, imported wines, gladiatorial spectacles, theatrical performances, and magical entertainments attract enormous crowds. Critics claim that the empire has grown soft, preferring comfort and intrigue to discipline and virtue.

Religion occupies a central place in daily life. Ancient Napthian gods continue to receive worship alongside deities introduced by Lassandros's successors. Temples own vast tracts of land, employ thousands of workers, and exert considerable political influence. Priests advise governors, bless military campaigns, and interpret omens believed to reveal the will of the gods. Rival temples frequently compete for wealth and prestige, sometimes becoming entangled in larger political struggles.

Life for ordinary citizens varies enormously. Farmers work fertile lands nourished by ancient irrigation systems. Merchants grow wealthy through long-distance trade. Craftsmen produce luxury goods sought throughout the known world. Yet heavy taxation, bureaucratic inefficiency, and endemic corruption burden much of the population. In some regions, local bandits are feared less than imperial tax collectors.

Despite its many problems, Massai remains one of the great powers of the age. Its armies still command respect. Its cities remain centers of culture and commerce. Its scholars continue to shape the intellectual life of the known world. Yet beneath this impressive façade, many believe the empire is slowly weakening. Border wars multiply. Corruption spreads. Provincial loyalties strengthen while imperial authority declines.



TRADE & ECONOMY

Economic activity is based mainly on agriculture, with dry farming mostly practiced in the southern regions and hilly areas with sufficient rainfall, while irrigationbased farming is the norm in areas of the interior with insufficient rainfall, but traversed by large rivers from which water could be distributed in canal networks. An alternative system exists in some places, where water is brought to the cultivable areas via underground channels (*qanats*). The Massai administration controls much of the water supply and other valuable natural resources, such as precious and utility metals, timber, and salt. The staple cereal crop is barley, with some wheat grown in the west, while the olive and vine flourish in the north. In the central regions near Massa, the date palm is the main fruit crop, while sesame oil replaced olive oil as the principal ingredient for cooking, lighting, and cosmetics. Animal husbandry is present alongside agriculture almost everywhere, but it was more significant in the nomadic populations living in arid regions bordering on cultivable areas and in the far south, where the long-range seasonal movement of flocks is practiced.

Trade and industry in the empire tends to be local, with cities and towns being supplied mainly with foodstuffs from the surrounding countryside and providing a few products of industry (principally textiles and metalwork) and services in exchange.Intra-regional and inter-regional trade in bulk commodities is difficult because of the high cost of land transport and the uniformity of production over large areas, even when the great rivers can facilitate the movement of goods. But some higher priced goods, e.g., textiles, do travel. Only along the coast is there an appreciable amount of bulk trade because of cheap transport by sea and significant variations in local conditions caused primarily by variable rainfall.

Longdistance trade in luxury goods from the south, principally frankincense, myrrh, spices, ivory, precious wood, and stones, arriv at the capital and from there out to the **Middle Sea**. Wool is the most important textile fiber in the empire, and as the textile industry is responsible for its most lucrative exports, sheep herders enjoy a certain higher status and perceived worth than farmers and herders of other types.

Each major city has a main market or street specifically set aside for trade. This market, known as a *bazaar*, is the center of all activity in the settlement, and is typically overcrowded and filled with goods and wares of all kinds. The riot of noise and color often conceals stealthy pick pockets, and visitors are assaulted with a barrage of screaming merchants hawking their wares.

The people of the cities are as varied as the people within the empire, and visitors can find shopkeepers, porters, drovers, bath boys, peddlers, handymen, carpenters, seasonal laborers, traders, merchants, doctors, landlords, government officials, jewelers, goldsmiths, moneylenders, bankers, restaurant owners, butchers, tentmakers, fullers, dyers, teachers, soldiers, sailors, astrologers, alchemists, fortune tellers, poets, foreigners, idlers, adventurers, beggars, thieves, and prostitutes, just to name a few. The goods for sale are equally as varied, and among other things, interested buyers can find cups and dishes; enamel works; musical instruments; statues; saddles and harnesses; belts; chests; satchels; tunics; silk sashes; gold-embroidered silk robes and silk robes edged with sable, mink, or other furs; shirts; trousers;

turbans; shoes; carpets and rugs; precious stones; spices; rare fruits; exotic animals; hemp; fine fabrics; musk; perfumes; spices; medicines; glassware; grain; oils; wool; and the most numerous commodity of all, slaves.

In addition to the bazaars, agricultural markets spring up outside the gates after harvest, set up by villagers from the surrounding countryside. These exterior markets turn into virtual cities themselves.

Homes throughout the empire vary by region. Around the region of Massa, people live in huts of reeds or palm branches. In some areas, houses are typically built from stone, while in forested areas, such as the southern shores of the **Middle Sea**, people live in houses built from timber. Some houses have an upper story, with the ground floor being reserved for stables and storerooms.

In others, people and their animals are jumbled together on a beaten earth floor. In cities, most shopkeepers tend to live above their shops, as renting a separate apartment or home for living space is far beyond most merchants' means.

THE SATRAPIES

The Empire of Massai is divided into administrative provinces known as satrapies. Each satrapy is governed by a satrap, an official appointed by the Emperor to oversee civil administration, military defense, law enforcement, and public works within a designated territory.

The satraps serve as the face of imperial authority throughout the realm. They maintain roads, supervise local courts, recruit soldiers, suppress banditry, negotiate with local rulers, and ensure the collection of taxes and tribute. In the more distant provinces, a satrap may wield authority rivaling that of a king. Yet the true genius of the system lies in its deliberate division of power.

Alongside every satrap operates an entirely separate network of royal financial administrators. These officials answer directly to Massa and are independent of local civil and military authorities. Their duty is to monitor the wealth of the province, collect taxes, manage treasuries, oversee royal estates, and authorize expenditures. A satrap may command thousands of soldiers, but he does not control the treasury.

Likewise, a financial administrator may oversee immense wealth, but possesses no military authority of his own.

This arrangement was originally established by Baracleus shortly after the fall of Lassandros's empire. Having witnessed the collapse of a realm built upon powerful generals and ambitious governors, he sought to ensure that no provincial ruler could easily transform himself into a rival emperor. By separating military authority from financial authority, the crown created a system in which both offices depended upon imperial approval to function effectively.

The system has endured for centuries and remains one of the primary reasons the empire has survived as long as it has.

Unfortunately, it has also created a bureaucracy of staggering complexity.

Entire districts may contain multiple layers of officials responsible for taxation, customs duties, agricultural assessments, road maintenance, irrigation oversight, temple revenues, trade inspections, and military provisioning. Requests often pass through numerous offices before receiving approval. Bribes, favors, and political connections frequently determine how quickly matters are resolved.

Competition between satraps and financial administrators is common. Each monitors the other for signs of corruption, disloyalty, or incompetence. Accusations flow constantly toward the imperial court. Some officials spend more time gathering evidence against rivals than governing their provinces.

In prosperous regions the system functions reasonably well, generating enormous revenues while maintaining public order. In troubled frontier provinces, however, it often produces paralysis. Military commanders complain they cannot obtain funds quickly enough to defend their borders. Financial administrators accuse governors of wasting imperial resources. Local officials exploit the confusion for personal gain.

The people of Massai have developed a saying: "The Emperor rules the empire, but the scribes decide how."

Though often mocked, the bureaucracy remains the backbone of imperial power. Caravans continue to move, taxes continue to be collected, soldiers continue to be paid, and roads continue to be maintained. Without the satrapies and their vast administrative apparatus, the empire would likely fragment within a generation.

Many believe it may do so anyway.

PANTHEON

The Massai worship the same pantehon as the Thessadonians.

NPCS

EMPEROR THEATUS

5th-level human fighter

Emperor Theatus is a man struggling to keep his empire together. He believes strongly in the divine right of his rule, and also believes that it is Massai's destiny to crush Nethia, which he views as Napthia resurgent (because, well, it is). Unfortunately, his rivals within the empire are more interested in his throne than his ambitions. For stats, use noble.

AC 2, **HD** 5 (27hp), **Att** 1 × *xiphos +1* (1d6+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with *xiphos +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 11 **CON** 13 **CHA** 12, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, **Specializations** Short sword, **Possessions** *xiphos +1*

PRINCE LEUKON

6th-level human fighter

The younger brother of Emperor Theatus, Prince Leukon commands much of the empire's frontier forces and spends little time at court. He is most often found leading campaigns against Narsehan raiders, bandit kings, desert tribes, and border incursions from Nethia. Plainspoken, courageous, and well liked by common soldiers, he enjoys a reputation for competence that often overshadows his brother's. Though fiercely loyal to the Emperor, numerous nobles and military officers quietly view Leukon as a better candidate for the throne and have begun seeking ways to draw him into their growing conspiracy.

AC 2, **HD** 6 (18hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with spear), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D5 W6 P7 B7 S9, **STR** 14 **INT** 13 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 16 **CON** 12 **CHA** 17, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, sword, **Specializations** Spear

THE LADY MELANTHA

4th-level human magic-user

Once a trusted officer of the Imperial Household Guard, Lady Melantha Veyr rose to prominence following the death of Empress Cassiane. Intelligent, beautiful, and gifted in the arcane arts, she has become the Emperor's closest confidante and lover, wielding influence rivaling that of senior ministers. Unknown to all but a handful of accomplices, Melantha secretly poisoned the Empress years ago and has carefully manipulated events ever since. Her growing influence over the Emperor has alarmed many nobles, who increasingly fear that the throne itself has fallen under her control. Rumors of resistance and plots against both Melantha and the Emperor spread throughout the empire.

AC 9, **HD** 4 (15hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4-1), **THACo** 19 (20 with dagger), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 7 **INT** 17 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 15 **CON** 9 **CHA** 17, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger **Spells** *hold portal, charm person, wizard lock*

LORIAN STARFIRE

10th-level elf sorcerer

Lorian Starfire dwells within an ancient observatory-fortress high in the Ashen Peaks, far from the intrigues of Massa. One of the most accomplished sorcerers in Massai, he is said to possess texts dating back to both Napthian pharaohs and the age of Lassandros. Though reclusive, rulers, scholars, and adventurers occasionally brave the mountains seeking his counsel. Vaelorian rarely intervenes in politics, but when he does, entire kingdoms pay attention.

AC 7, **HD** 10 (18hp), **Att** 1 × *staff +3* (1d4+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with *staff +3*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 9 **INT** 17 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 16 **CON** 11 **CHA** 14, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *crystal ball, flying carpet, staff +3, potion of invisibility, wand of polymorph* (8 charges), **Spells** *animate blood, eye of the tiger, black blood, breathe, ground rot, red sign of Skelos, alter dreams, summon lyncanthrope, animal ally, cause blindness or deafness, from shadow to shadow, desiccate, unseen serpents, possession, awful rite of the werebeast*

CASSIA OF SELANDROS

6th-level human cleric

A devoted priestess of Akathana, Sister Cassia believes wisdom is proven through action rather than contemplation alone. Armed with shield, spear, and a keen tactical mind, she travels the known world seeking lost knowledge, ancient battlefields, and forgotten relics of civilization. Though respected for her insight and courage, Cassia is equally known for involving herself in conflicts where poor leadership threatens innocent lives, often offering strategic counsel whether it is wanted or not.

AC 1, **HD** 6 (19hp), **Att** 1 × mace (1d8+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with mace), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **STR** 13 **INT** 11 **WIS** 18 **DEX** 17 **CON** 10 **CHA** 14, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, war hammer, **Spells** *protection from evil, light, cure light wounds, bless, charm animal, cure disease*

BARAMEN DOXOS, MAGISTRATE

5th-level gnome

The Emperor's most trusted advisor, Baramen Doxos oversees petitions, intelligence reports, and matters of state too delicate for public discussion. Recently, he has uncovered troubling signs of a conspiracy within the nobility, though evidence remains frustratingly elusive. Unwilling to level accusations without proof—or risk alarming Emperor Theatus prematurely—Baramen has quietly employed adventurers, informants, and spies to investigate. He fears that if he moves too soon, the conspirators will vanish; if he waits too long, civil war may follow.

AC 11 (9 vs. large opponents), **HD** 5 (16hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B14 S11, **STR** 9 **INT** 8 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 8 **CON** 13 **CHA** 11, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, **Abilities** Detect Construction Tricks: 2-in-6 when searching, Hiding: 90% in woodland cover; 2-in-6 in dungeons (shadows/cover); must be motionless, Infravision 90', Listening at Doors: 2-in-6, Speak with Burrowing Mammals: knows secret language of burrowing mammals (badgers, moles, etc.) **Spells** *color spray, hypnosis, invisibility, blur, hallucinatory terrain*

STHENIA OF THE STONE GARDEN

Deep within a maze of caves beneath the forested hills dwells Sthenia, a cunning medusa known among sorcerers and alchemists throughout Massai. She harvests venom from the serpents upon her head and sells it for use in rare spells, curses, and magical elixirs. Payment is seldom accepted in coin alone. Sthenia often demands living subjects for her collection, transforming them into stone and arranging them throughout her cavern halls. Her "Stone Garden" now contains hundreds of statues, from bandits and adventurers to unfortunate nobles and rival spellcasters.

For stats, use medusa.

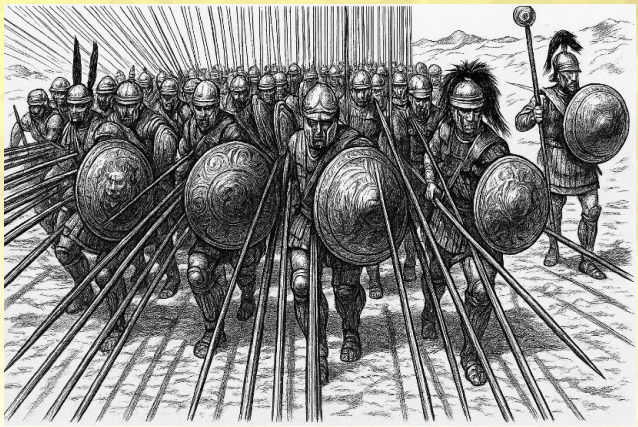
UNITS

The armies of Massai reflect the vast size and diversity of the empire itself. Soldiers are drawn from dozens of satrapies, cultures, and traditions, ranging from disciplined phalanx infantry and heavily armored cavalry to desert skirmishers, archers, scouts, and foreign mercenaries. Some units trace their lineage to

the armies of Lassandros the Conqueror, while others preserve military practices far older, inherited from the ancient Napthian Empire. Though corruption and political intrigue have weakened portions of the military establishment, Massai remains capable of fielding enormous armies when properly mobilized. The following pages describe the various military units employed throughout the empire, along with the numbers available to the Emperor in times of war.

HOPLITES (×300)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for spearmen POAs

SWORDSMEN (×150)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short sword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2



PHALANX (×120)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Pikemen vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +5
Pikemen vs. Light Foot: +4
Pikemen vs. Medium Foot: +3
Pikemen vs. Heavy Foot: +2
Pikemen vs. Large: +1
Impact Charge (2+ spaces): +4 PoA

CAVALRY (×30)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 60' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Light Large vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +3
Light Large vs. Light Foot: +2
See spearmen POAs in **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook**

WAR ELEPHANTS (×30)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 (50 elephants) **HD**: 11
TOTAL HD: 550
MV: 60' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Heavy Large
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1
Heavy Large vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +5
Heavy Large vs. Light Foot: +4
Heavy Large vs. Medium Foot: +3
Heavy Large vs. Light Large: +1
Impact Charge (2+ spaces): +4 PoA
See spearmen POAs in **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook**

PHAROS

Capital: Xandra
Demographics: 86% human, 9% gnome, 3% half-elf, 1% half-orc, 1% other
Notable Settlements: Xandra (100,000 families; Market Value I), Caria (80,000 families; Market Value I), Zau (60,000 families; Market Value II), Lycia (40,000 families; Market Value III), Hebyt (50,000; Market Value III)
Population: 6.45 million people (1.29 million families)
Government: Monarchy
Rulers: Civil War between King Tehlmaiac IV and his sister, Queen Khepatra
Annual Treasury: 1,375,000 pp (roughly 700,000 pp in the royal treasury
Expenses: 820,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Slaves, grain, exotic spices, sandstone, lime, ox hides, linen, papyrus, gold vessels, pottery vases
Demand Values: Exotic hides -2, exotic woods -1, fish-1, iron ore +1, luxury goods +3, marble +2, olive oil +1, papyrus -1, slaves +1, spices -1, textiles -1,

Beasts of Peril: Androsphinx, bulette, camels, chuul, displacer beast, dog, dragon turtle, dust mephit, earth elemental, efreet, elephant, flying snake, ghast, ghost, ghoul, giant centipede, giant crab, giant hyena, guardian naga, giant poisonous snake, giant scorpion, gynosphinx, hunter shark, jackalwere, lamia, liches, lion, manticore, marid, mummies, naga, rhinoceros, scorpionmen, vampire, wraith, yuan-ti

A Successor Kingdom of Lassandros the Conqueror's short-lived empire, Pharos is a land of sands and serpents, long known for its worship of the Demon-God Set, and his terrible dark queen Tiamat. The Pharos of today is a blend of ancient Pharosian culture and Thessadonian. Wicked and righteous, and locked in a stalemate civil war that threatens the grain supplies of of its neighbors.

Pharos is the bread basket of the **Middle Sea**. Its acres produce more bushels of wheat than any other area of the known world (specifically the hexes along the might Landra River—instead of 8 bushels of wheat per acre, they produce 12; refer to the ECONOMICS chapter in **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for more information). This makes Pharos a very important trading partner to many nations who rely on them for their gran—nations such as Karth, among others. To maintain this level of production, all agricultural land in Pharos is royal land. Farmers who work on the land do so for compulsory reasons. Every year, the Royal Agricultural Ministry provides seeds to the people and tells them what to plant. At harvest time, the people must return an equal amount of seeds, plus a large cut of the crop yield.

Any farmer who deviates from this plan is severely penalized. However, such penalties are always pecuniary rather than corporal—Pharos doesn't want to terrorize its subjects into compliance, it just wants the money.

ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE

After the Lacardé Dynasty took control nearly 250 years ago, the kingdom's administrative and economy underwent a thorough reorganization. King Airc ordered a complete consensus of the kingdom and recorded all sources of water—position, quality, irrigation potential, and so forth. He then instituted many of the important agricultural innovations that help make Pharos so prosperous today. New crops were introduced, and massive irrigation works and cultivation began in many areas, especially in the areas around Xandra, where there was heavy settling of Xellandran colonists.

The wealth of Pharos flows from the Landra River. Without it, the kingdom would be little more than a scattering of oases, fishing villages, and fortified settlements clinging to life amid the desert. With it, Pharos has become the greatest agricultural power in the known world.

Every year the Landra floods its banks, depositing rich black silt across hundreds of miles of farmland. These floods replenish the soil naturally, allowing fields to remain productive for generations without the decline seen elsewhere. Entire communities measure time according to the rise and fall of the river, and many ancient religious festivals remain tied to the agricultural cycle.

The kingdom's prosperity depends upon one of the most extensive irrigation systems ever constructed. Thousands of miles of canals, ditches, levees, reservoirs, and flood basins carry water from the Landra into otherwise barren regions. Some of these works date back to the ancient Pharaoh-Kings, while others were expanded or rebuilt following the conquest of Lassandros and the rise of the Lacardé Dynasty. Maintaining this system requires enormous labor and bureaucratic oversight. Every village is responsible for providing workers to clear canals, repair embankments, and maintain waterworks throughout the year.

Unlike most kingdoms, virtually all productive farmland in Pharos is legally owned by the crown. Farmers do not own the fields they work. Instead, they lease their plots from the Royal Agricultural Ministry, which determines what crops will be planted and where.

Government scribes maintain detailed records concerning field boundaries, irrigation access, crop yields, labor obligations, and taxation. Surveyors travel constantly throughout the river valley, measuring fields and inspecting harvests.

The ministry distributes seed grain each planting season and issues cultivation orders to local officials. Wheat remains the most important crop, but barley, flax, lentils, chickpeas, dates, onions, figs, and numerous specialty crops are also cultivated throughout the kingdom. Farmers are expected to follow these directives precisely. The government regards agriculture not as a private enterprise but as a matter of state security.

At harvest time, ministry officials collect taxes directly from the fields. Grain is measured, recorded, and stored in royal granaries located throughout the kingdom. These vast storehouses serve as both tax collection centers and emergency reserves during years of poor flooding. The bureaucracy surrounding this process is immense. Entire generations of scribes spend their lives tracking crop yields, tax revenues, irrigation records, and grain shipments.

This system can be burdensome, but it is extraordinarily effective. Few realms can match the agricultural output of Pharos. The grain fleets that sail from its ports feed cities and armies throughout the Middle Sea. Karth, Thessadonia, Massai, and countless smaller realms all depend upon Pharosian grain imports to supplement their own harvests.

The kingdom's rulers understand the leverage this provides. Grain exports are closely regulated and frequently used as diplomatic tools. A favorable trade agreement may result in abundant shipments at generous prices. A hostile policy may find grain delayed, restricted, or redirected elsewhere.

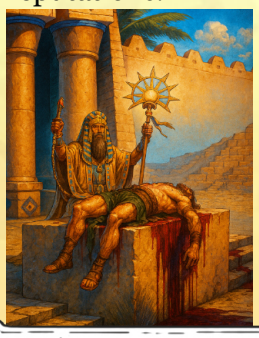
Beyond agriculture, Pharos possesses a thriving economy built upon river trade, papyrus production, stone quarrying, glassmaking, textile manufacture, and maritime commerce. Merchant vessels travel constantly between the river ports and the wider **Middle Sea**, carrying grain, wine, linen, spices, slaves, and luxury goods. The kingdom's temples also control enormous wealth, owning estates, workshops, granaries, and trading concerns throughout the realm.

Yet for all its prosperity, the current civil war threatens the foundations of this system. Irrigation networks have been damaged in contested territories. Grain shipments have been disrupted by military activity and piracy. Labor shortages plague some regions, while others suffer from competing tax collectors representing rival claimants to the throne. Though the Landra continues to flood and the fields remain fertile, many fear that prolonged conflict could transform the breadbasket of the **Middle Sea** into a source of famine for half the known world.

CULTURE AND DAILY LIFE

Pharos is a kingdom of stark contrasts. Towering temples and sprawling palaces rise above crowded districts of laborers, merchants, sailors, scribes, and farmers. Ancient traditions dating back thousands of years exist alongside customs introduced by Thessadonian conquerors centuries ago. The result is a culture that is neither wholly Pharosian nor wholly Thessadonian, but a blend of both.

Religion permeates nearly every aspect of life. Most people make daily offerings to household gods and ancestral spirits, while temple festivals dominate the civic calendar. The worship of Set remains particularly strong throughout much of the kingdom, especially in rural districts and among the old noble families. Even those who reject the darker aspects of his faith acknowledge his importance as a god of deserts, storms, strength, and kingship. Temples dedicated to Tiamat and other serpent deities can also be found throughout the realm, though many operate discreetly due to their controversial reputations.



Family is the foundation of Pharosian society. Households often consist of several generations living together under a single roof. Ancestor veneration is widespread, and family tombs are carefully maintained. Social status is important, but wealth and education often matter more than noble birth alone. Successful merchants, scribes, and priests can attain considerable influence.

Literacy is far more common in Pharos than in most kingdoms. The immense bureaucracy requires a constant supply of scribes, accountants, surveyors, and administrators. A talented commoner who demonstrates aptitude with numbers and writing may find opportunities unavailable elsewhere.

The river shapes everyday life. Barges carrying grain, livestock, stone, papyrus, and passengers travel constantly along the Landra. Villages celebrate the annual flooding with festivals, feasts, and religious ceremonies. Farmers carefully watch water levels, knowing that too little flooding can mean famine while too much can destroy entire communities.

Food varies by social class. Common laborers survive largely on bread, onions, lentils, fish, dates, and beer. Wealthier citizens enjoy roasted meats, imported wines, honey cakes, figs, spices, and exotic foods brought by merchant fleets from distant lands. Public markets are lively affairs filled with entertainers, fortune tellers, priests, merchants, and wandering adventurers.

Though prosperous, Pharos is also a land obsessed with death and remembrance. Tombs, funerary monuments, ancestor shrines, and mortuary temples are common sights. Most Pharosians believe that preserving the memory of the dead is one of the highest duties of the living.

VISITING A PHAROSIAN CITY

Visitors arriving in a Pharosian city are immediately confronted by its scale. Massive walls, colossal statues, towering obelisks, temple complexes, and sprawling markets dominate the skyline. Many cities are divided into distinct districts, with merchant quarters, temple precincts, administrative centers, docks, artisan neighborhoods, and residential wards occupying different sections of the city.

Foreigners are common in major cities, particularly merchants from Karth, Thessadonia, Massai, and countless smaller

realms. Visitors are expected to register with customs officials at city gates or river docks. Goods are inspected, taxes assessed, and records entered into official ledgers. Bureaucracy is a fact of life in Pharos.

Most travelers find lodging in caravanserais, river inns, or merchant hostels. Caravanserais are particularly common near city gates and docks, providing food, stabling, storage, and guarded courtyards for travelers and merchants. Wealthier visitors may stay in private guest houses operated by merchant families or temple organizations.

Food is readily available from taverns, public kitchens, market stalls, bakeries, and inns. Fresh bread, fish stew, lentils, dates, roasted fowl, wine, and beer can be purchased in nearly every district. Harbor neighborhoods are particularly famous for inexpensive seafood and lively entertainment.

Markets are heavily regulated. Most cities maintain dedicated commercial districts where nearly all legal trade occurs. Weapons, armor, tools, livestock, magical components, imported goods, and luxury items are generally available, though prices vary according to local taxes and current political conditions. Specialized guilds often oversee the manufacture and sale of weapons and armor, ensuring quality standards and collecting fees on behalf of the government.

Adventurers seeking unusual equipment often visit the market districts surrounding military barracks, river ports, or temple complexes. Such areas attract mercenaries, caravan guards, explorers, and treasure hunters from across the known world.

LAW & JUSTICE

Law in Pharos is enforced by a combination of city guards, royal magistrates, temple authorities, and bureaucratic officials. Major cities maintain large professional guard forces responsible for keeping order, protecting government property, collecting taxes, and suppressing unrest. Patrols are common, particularly near markets, government buildings, and temple districts.

Pharosian justice emphasizes order, taxation, and social stability. Authorities are generally less concerned with morality than with preserving public peace and protecting the flow of commerce. Bribery exists, but severe corruption is harshly punished when discovered.

Most crimes are handled through fines, restitution, confiscation of property, or forced labor. Because the kingdom depends heavily upon agricultural production and public works, labor sentences are particularly common. Convicted criminals may spend months or years repairing canals, clearing irrigation ditches, hauling stone, or working on government construction projects.

Imprisonment is typically reserved for those awaiting trial or execution. Maintaining large prison populations is considered wasteful. More serious crimes such as murder, treason, temple robbery, large-scale smuggling, or sedition may result in execution, enslavement, mutilation, or exile to remote frontier settlements.

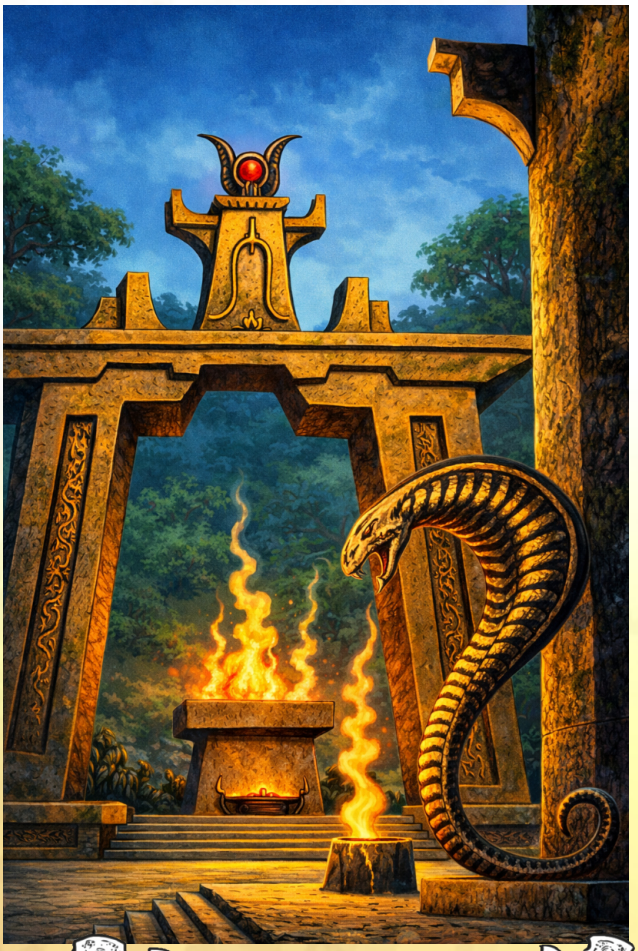
Magic is carefully monitored. Unauthorized necromancy, demon worship, magical sabotage of irrigation works, or interference with royal granaries are considered grave offenses. Such crimes often bring swift intervention from both secular authorities and powerful temple organizations.

Wrath-Amon and the Black Ring of Set

Few names inspire greater fear among sages, priests, and students of forbidden lore than Wrath-Amon, Master of the Black Ring and greatest living servant of Set. Though most believe him to be a human sorcerer of extraordinary age and power, the truth is known only to a handful of scholars and serpent cults. Wrath-Amon is in fact one of the ancient Serpent Men, a race older than most human civilizations and among the first servants of Set during the elder ages of the world.

Like many of his kind, Wrath-Amon possesses the ability to cloak himself in powerful illusions, allowing him to appear as a handsome nobleman, wandering scholar, merchant prince, or even a trusted advisor. Through such disguises he has manipulated kings, corrupted temples, toppled dynasties, and founded secret cults across the **Middle Sea**. Entire wars have been fought because of schemes whose origins can be traced back to his hidden hand.

His true lair lies deep within the deserts of Pharos, in a colossal pyramid abandoned long before the rise of the first Pharaoh-Kings. There, beneath chambers untouched by sunlight for millennia, he rules over a hidden kingdom of serpent men, cultists, summoned demons, and monstrous guardians. Though many nobles and rulers know of Wrath-Amon's existence, few dare challenge him. To them he is simply an ancient sorcerer of immeasurable power whose wrath is best avoided.



In truth, Wrath-Amon pursues a singular goal: the release of Set from the Abyss.

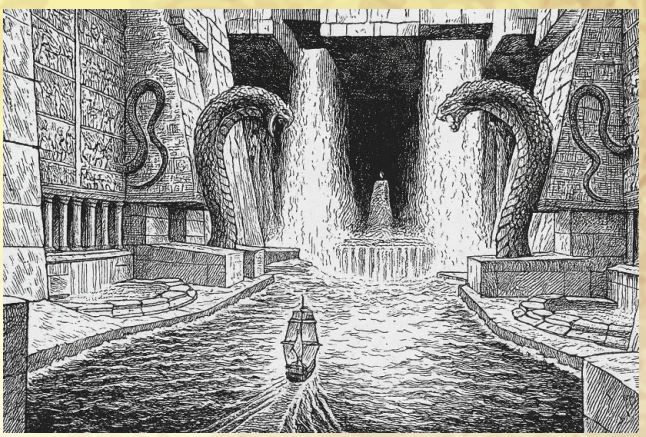
Ancient prophecies recovered from forgotten tombs speak of a ritual capable of shattering the prison that binds the Serpent God. To complete this working, Wrath-Amon must gather vast quantities of star metal, the rare celestial substance that falls from the heavens within meteors. Once enough has been collected, he intends to forge a massive ring of star metal and raise it atop his pyramid. There, beneath a conjunction of stars foretold in serpent prophecies, he will perform a ritual capable of tearing open the boundaries between worlds and allowing Set to return.

For years his agents have searched for this precious metal. Serpent men disguised as merchants, scholars, priests, nobles, mercenaries, and adventurers travel throughout the **Middle Sea** seeking fragments of fallen stars. Some purchase it. Others steal it. Entire expeditions have vanished in remote mountains or deserts after discovering meteorite deposits before Wrath-Amon's servants could claim them.

Yet the very substance he seeks is also his greatest vulnerability.

Star metal disrupts the illusion magic upon which the serpent men depend. Any serpent man who approaches a sufficiently large quantity of the metal finds their magical disguise weakened or stripped away entirely, revealing their true reptilian form. Worse still, weapons forged from star metal possess the power to destroy them utterly. A serpent man slain by such a weapon is not merely killed. Its spirit is cast screaming into the Abyss, forever separated from the mortal world and drawn toward the dark domain of Set.

Because of this, Wrath-Amon seeks to control every known source of star metal while simultaneously eliminating those who wield it.



Unfortunately for him, fate appears to have other plans.

Throughout the lands surrounding the **Middle Sea**, weapons forged from fallen stars have begun resurfacing. Some lie hidden within forgotten tombs. Others have been discovered in dragon hoards, ancient ruins, or the vaults of long-dead kings. A few have already found their way into the hands of adventurers, heroes, and champions who know nothing of their true significance.

Priests speak of prophecy. Sages speak of coincidence. Wrath-Amon believes neither. He knows that if enough bearers of star metal unite against him before the ritual is complete, the designs he has spent centuries weaving may finally unravel. Thus the Master of the Black Ring wages a secret war across the world, hunting relics of fallen stars while preparing for the day when Set's prison will break and the Age of Serpents will begin anew.

CIVIL WAR

Airc Lacardé, best friend of Lassandros the Conqueror and commander of his famed Thunder Cavalry, took control of Pharos after Lassandros's death, and his dynasty has ruled ever since. His son, Airc II, instituted the tradition of marrying within the family when he fell in love with and married his own sister. To this day, the King and Queen are always brother and sister.

The current King and Queen of Pharos are King Tehlmaiac IV and Queen Khepatra. The problem is, Tehlmaiac is only 15 years old, while Khepatra is 24. Queen Khepatra first came to power 10 years ago at the age of 14, and since her brother was only 5 years old, she inherited sole rule. But over the past two years, a court adviser, a priest by the name of Sargon, slowly poisoned the young king's ear, convincing him that his sister had far too much power. The impressionable young man was swayed, and when he tried to assert more power, it caused a rift between them, and soon an all-out war.

Today, Khepatra controls all of the land along the coast north of Xandra, while Tehlmaiac controls the land along the Landra. The two armies are at a stalemate. But while her King brother stays in Xandra, Khepatra is forced to constantly move in order to avoid his assassins.

PANTHEON

The people of Pharos view the gods as ancient powers whose favor sustains civilization and whose wrath can bring ruin upon entire kingdoms. Religion is woven into every aspect of daily life, from the planting of crops and the flooding of the Landra River to royal coronations, military campaigns, and the preparation of the dead for the afterlife. Nearly every household maintains a shrine, and offerings to gods, ancestors, and protective spirits are commonplace.

Unlike many lands, the people of Pharos see little distinction between religion and government. Temples own vast estates, administer enormous wealth, and wield considerable political influence. Priests serve as advisors, judges, scholars, and administrators, while great temple complexes dominate the skylines of nearly every major city.

The pantheon itself reflects the kingdom's divided nature. Ancient Pharosian gods continue to be worshipped alongside deities introduced by Thessadonian conquerors centuries ago. Foremost among the old gods is Set, Lord of Serpents, Storms, Deserts, and Kingship. Though many regard him with fear, his worship remains deeply rooted throughout the kingdom. Other cults honor gods of the river, fertility, death, wisdom, magic, and the heavens, each claiming ancient authority and sacred traditions.

Religious festivals are among the grandest spectacles in Pharos. Processions carry sacred images through crowded streets while priests chant ancient hymns and burn costly incense. Temples host feasts, athletic contests, public ceremonies, and dramatic reenactments of divine myths. Beneath the celebration, however, lies a deeply held belief that the gods remain active in mortal affairs. Floods, droughts, plagues, monstrous births, celestial omens, and military victories are all viewed as signs of divine favor—or divine judgment.

Below are the gods unique to Pharos.

SET, DEMON-GOD OF THE ELDER LANDS

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A Coiled Serpent
The scaled god, husband of Tiamat

Tiamat, Goddess of Dragons

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Multi-headed Dragon
Wife of Set

Horuthor, God of War

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Hawk-Headed Man
Son of Bes

Bes, Lord of Light

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Lion
Enemy of Set

Hedja, Goddess of the Rains and Flooding

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Baboon
Wife of Bes

HARAK, GOD OF PAPYRUS AND SCROLLS

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Jackal-Headed Man
Patron of Scholars

NPCS

IKING TEHLMAIAC IV: KING OF PHAROS, BROTHER OF KHEPATRA

Only 15 years old, King Tehlmaiac is under the manipulation of the Court High Priest, Sargon. His tantrums have led to a reputation of being both unpredictable and cruel. He is obsessed with killing his older sister, Queen Khepatra.

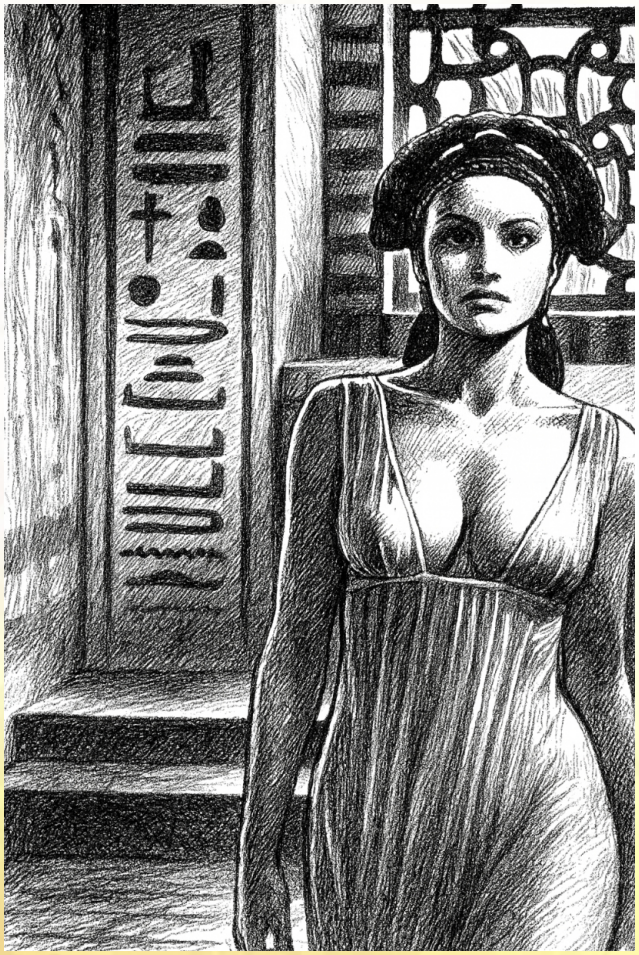
For stats use noble.

QUEEN KHEPATRA: QUEEN OF PHAROS

5th-level human thief

Queen Khepatra is currently in a fight for the throne with her brother—and she's losing. To help giver her back an edge in the conflict, she has begun sending adventurers to the Titan Spine mountains on the southern border of Pharos to explore the ancient ruins of past civilizations found there to uncover ancient knowledge and artifacts that might help her in her quest.

AC 10, **HD** 5 (15hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4-1), **THACo** 14 (15 with dagger), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P9 B12 S13, **STR** 7 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 10 **CHA** 18, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, short bow, spear, **Abilities** Open Locks 35%, Find/Remove Traps 30%, Pick Pockets 40%, Move Silently 40%, Climb Sheer Walls 91%, Hide in Shadows 30%, Hear Noise (1d6) 1-3 (1d6)



SARGON: HIGH PRIEST OF SET, FORMER LORD OF THE BLACK CIRCLE

11th-level serpentman cleric

Though to the king and the rest of Pharos he appears as the High Priest of Bes, Sargon is in fact the ex-eader of a powerful secret cult dedicated to the Demon-God Set, but when he was betrayed by his disciple, Wrath-Amon, he lost his Black Ring and thus his power and position. He fled, and now plots to manipulate the young king to the throne, and then through him, wage a war against Wrath-Amon to reclaim his power.

AC 2, **HD** 11 (42hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +3* (1d8+4), **THACo** 12 (8 with *broadsword +3*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D2 W3 P5 B6 S4, **STR** 14 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, flail, mace, sling, staff, war hammer, **Possessions** *broadsword +3, staff of snakes, scroll of finger of death* **Spells** *detect evil, remove fear, purify food and water, protection from evil, find traps, silence 15' radius, snake charm, hold person, growth of animals, cure disease, cure blindness, neutralize poison, detect lie, speak with plants, raise dead, true seeing,* **Abilities** Poison: Causes death in 1d6 turns (save versus poison), Magic Resistance: +4 bonus to all saving throws against magic

WRATH-AMON

14th-level serpentman cleric / 11th-level sorcerer / 9th-level fighter

Wrath-Amon is the current lord of the Black Ring. The Black Ring grants 14 levels of cleric, and can cast *finger of death*, *cause serious wounds,* and *darkness* once until it is recharged by receiving a blessing from a golden statue of Set in Wrath-Amon's pyramid lair. The ring also acts as a *ring of protection*.

AC 2, **HD** 34 (71hp), **Att** 1 × *khopesh +3* (1d6+7), **THACo** 10 (3 with *khopesh +3*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D2 W2 P4 B4 S2, **STR** 18 **INT** 11 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 15 **CON** 17 **CHA** 9, **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, flail, mace, sling, staff, short sword, sword, two-handed sword, war hammer, **Specializations** Short sword, **Possessions** *khopesh +3,* **Spells** *cure light wounds, detect evil, detect magic, light, resist cold, protection from evil, silence 15' radius, bless, warp wood, hold person, resist fire, cure disease, striking, cure blindness, remove curse, continual light, protection from evil 10' radius, stick to snakes, cure serious wounds, neutralize poison, create food, commune, insect plague, fogbolt, astrological prediction, snuff the blinding flame, trace the blood worm, psychometry, the dead speak, unnatural strength, dance of the cobras, life drain, Tathos's grasping tentacles, vomit horror, crawlers of the mouth, darkness simulacrum, dark slither, possession, draw forth the soul*
Abilities Poison: Causes death in 1d6 turns (save versus poison), Magic Resistance: +4 bonus to all saving throws against magic

DREGS

Dregs is Wrath-Amon's long-suffering naga servant, a schemer whose ambition greatly exceeds his competence. Cowardly, sneaky, and constantly seeking opportunities for personal advancement, he dreams of one day ruling the Serpent Men himself, though his plans invariably end in disaster. Dregs survives through flattery, deception, and an uncanny ability to avoid blame when things go wrong. Despite his many failures, Wrath-Amon continues to employ him, much to the confusion of everyone else in the cult of Set. For stats use naga.

AGOTHOCLEA: HEAD OF QUEEN KHEPATRA'S ROYAL BODYGUARD

7th-level human fighter

Also a slave, Agothoclea is one of the fiercest fighters in Queen Khepatra's army, and has been the head of her royal bodyguards for the past five years, as well as one of her favorite mistresses. She is also fanatically devoted to the queen, and also jealous of Queen Khepatra's other many lovers.

AC 7, **HD** 7 (47hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (1d8+1), **THACo** 14 (13 with scimitar), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 9 **INT** 7 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 16 **CON** 17 **CHA** 15, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, sling, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword

CAPTAIN PAKHOR, SON OF MENKARA

7th-level human fighter

Captain Pakhor commands the royal guard of King Tehlmaiac IV and is widely regarded as one of the finest soldiers in Pharos. Stern, disciplined, and fiercely loyal to the throne, he has survived countless palace intrigues, assassination attempts, and battlefield campaigns. Though respected by both nobles and common soldiers, Pakhor increasingly finds himself caught between competing factions in the kingdom's civil war. His loyalty remains with the king, but he quietly fears that enemies already lurk within the royal court itself.

AC 6, **HD** 7 (44hp), **Att** 1 × scimitar (1d8+2), **THACo** 14 (12 with scimitar), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 10 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 13 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, sling, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword

DWARF ROYAL GUARDS

3rd-level dwarfs

For more than a century, the personal guard of King Tehlmaiac IV has been drawn exclusively from the dwarven clans of the Redstone Hills. Known throughout Pharos as the King's Dwarves, these elite warriors are famed for their discipline, loyalty, and incorruptibility. Tradition holds that a dwarven guard serves the throne rather than the ruler, swearing to protect the kingdom itself above any political faction. Clad in ornate bronze armor and wielding massive axes, they are among the most respected and feared soldiers in all of Pharos.

AC 4, **HD** 3 (18hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+3), **THACo** 19 (16 with spear), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B13 S12, **STR** 16 **INT** 14 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 9 **CON** 16 **CHA** 9, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Hand axe, mace, spear, **Specializations** Spear, **Abilities** Infravision 60', Detect construction tricks 2-in-6, Detect room traps 2-in-6, Hear noise 2-in-6, Never lost underground, +4 saves vs magic & poison, Surprised only 1-in-6

GENERAL HOREMHEB AK-TEF

7th-level human fighter

Commander of Queen Khepatra's armies, Horemheb Ak-Tef is a veteran strategist whose victories along the Landra River have made him a hero to her supporters. Calm, disciplined, and fiercely pragmatic, he prefers careful planning to reckless heroics. Though utterly loyal to Khepatra, he views the civil war as a tragedy that weakens Pharos and enriches its enemies. Many believe he is the finest military commander currently serving either side of the conflict.

AC 5, **HD** 7 (40hp), **Att** 1 × *khopesh +1* (1d6+3), **THACo** 14 (11 with *khopesh +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 13 **CON** 13 **CHA** 15, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, spear, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *khopesh +1, linothorax +1*

TAPETHRÉ: QUEEN KHEPATRA'S ROYAL PHYSICIAN AND COUNCILOR

6th-level human acolyte

One of Queen Khepatra's many slaves, Tepethré holds a special place of honor as a trusted councilor, physican, and even friend. Tapethré is fanatically loyal to the queen, and often speaks for her to lower class visitors (such as adventurers), since the queen rarely speaks directly to anyone who isn't within her inner circle, or a member of some sort of nobility (as has been and continues to be customary for her dynasty).

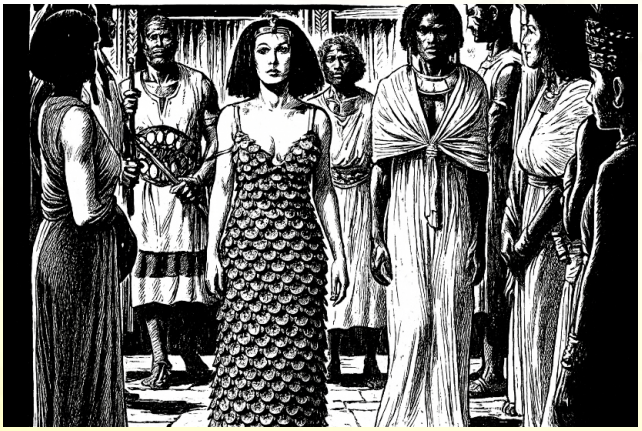
AC 10, **HD** 6 (16hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 10 **INT** 17 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 9 **CON** 10 **CHA** 9, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, staff, **Abilities** Combat: any armor and shields; blunt weapons only (club, mace, sling, staff, war hammer), Healing: from 2nd level, 1/day per level heal by touch — cures 1d3 HP or grants another save vs negative effect, Skills (within 30', rolled on d%): Bless (BL), Detect Magic (DM), Know Alignment (KA), Purify (PU), Rally (RA), Turn Undead (TU)

NEFRU-SATET

6th-level human assassin

Once one of King Tehlmaiac IV's most effective covert agents, Nefru-Satet now enjoys a position of growing influence within the royal court. Beautiful, intelligent, and dangerously ambitious, she has recently begun cultivating the king's affections while quietly expanding her network of allies and informants. Her rise has alarmed Sargon, who distrusts both her motives and her methods. Whether Nefru-Satet seeks genuine influence or something far more dangerous remains a matter of growing concern among the kingdom's elite.

AC 9, **HD** 6 (16hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 9 **INT** 16 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 15 **CON** 11 **CHA** 17, **ML** 6, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, crossbow, short bow, short sword, **Abilities** Open Locks 40%, Find/Remove Traps 35%, Pick Pockets 45%, Move Silently 45%, Climb Sheer Walls 92%, Hide in Shadows 35%, Hear Noise 1-3 (1d6), Assassination: +4 to hit unaware humanoid from behind; victim saves vs death at level-based penalty or dies instantly, Disguise: 2% detection chance, +2% per change (class/race/sex); height up to 3in shorter or 5in taller, Poison: victims of assassin poisoning suffer -2 to save, Hirelings: can hire assassins



UNITS

The armies of Pharos were once among the most formidable forces in the known world, guarding the grain fields of the Landra River and projecting royal power throughout the **Middle Sea**. Today, however, the kingdom's military is divided by civil war. Some units remain loyal to King Tehlmaiac IV, while others have declared for Queen Khepatra, creating a conflict that has split provinces, cities, temples, and even families. Despite these divisions, both sides draw upon the same military traditions. Pharosian armies field disciplined spear formations, skilled archers, charioteers, cavalry, river patrols, and elite guards drawn from both native and Thessadonian customs. Mercenaries, desert tribes, temple warriors, and foreign auxiliaries further supplement their ranks. The following pages describe the various military units employed throughout Pharos, along with the numbers available to each faction as the struggle for the throne continues.

ARCHERS (King's Army ×60, Queen's Army ×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short bow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

INFANTRY (King's Army ×135, Queen's Army ×90)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short bow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

SPEARMEN (King's Army ×165, Queen's Army ×120)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short bow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen, Spearmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for spearment POAs

CAVALRY (King's Army ×6, Queen's Army ×24)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 300
MV: 60' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen, Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Light Large vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +3
Light Large vs. Light Foot: +2
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for spearment POAs

CHARIOTS (King's Army ×24, Queen's Army ×0)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 6
TOTAL HD: 600
MV: 60' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear), 1d6 (short bow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Large
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Ranged, Spearmen
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Light Large vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +3
Light Large vs. Light Foot: +2
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for spearment POAs

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to **THE MIDDLE SEA**! I presume you came here after reading the **CORE RULEBOOK**, but if not, be sure to check it out:

THE NERD FOLDER

The purpose of this PDF is to serve largely as the campaign setting, with a few DM-specific crunch (like a few magic items).

XP AWARDS FOR COINS

Before we dive in to the fluff, let's quickly discuss the game mechanic of gold for XP. In *Old-School Essentials*, this is 1 XP per 1 GP. But in the **Middle Sea**, this is 1 XP per 1 bronze piece (BP). Keep in mind, this is for treasure acquired on adventures, and does not include selling non-magical materials (armor, weapons, ships, etc), nor does it include coin earned from labor or wages.

The conversion amount for coins can be found in the **Core Rulebook**.

KINGDOM CHAPTERS

Each kingdom chapter begins with a summary panel that presents key information about the realm. This section provides a quick reference for the kingdom's political structure, economy, population, and major threats.

The elements of the beginning entry are organized as follows:

CAPITAL

The primary seat of government and the political center of the kingdom.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The approximate racial composition of the population expressed as percentages.

NOTABLE SETTLEMENTS

Major cities or settlements within the kingdom.

Each entry lists:

- ▶The settlement name
- ▶The number of families living there
- ▶The settlement's Market Value rating

POPULATION

The total population of the kingdom. In some entries, the number of families may also be provided.

GOVERNMENT

The form of government used to rule the kingdom (for example, monarchy).

RULER

The current sovereign or ruling authority.

ANNUAL TREASURY

The kingdom's approximate yearly revenue. Some entries also list how much of this wealth is held directly within the royal treasury.

EXPENSES

The kingdom's typical yearly expenditures for administration, defense, infrastructure, and other state functions.

Common Trade Goods

Major goods commonly exported or traded by the kingdom. These represent the products that define the realm's economy and trade routes.

Demand Values

These values indicate how strongly the kingdom demands certain goods. Positive values represent higher demand, while negative values indicate plentiful supply or lower demand.

Beasts of Peril

Creatures commonly found within the kingdom's wilderness, deserts, mountains, coasts, or ruins. These monsters represent the typical dangers adventurers may encounter while traveling through the realm.

Kingdom Content

The chapters themselves expand on this summary and provide a fuller picture of the kingdom. Each chapter presents an overview of the realm's culture, history, and legal system, explaining how the society developed and how order is maintained. Information on the kingdom's military is also included, with appropriate mass combat stat blocks for its armed forces.

Each kingdom chapter also describes the region's pantheon and religious practices, detailing the gods most commonly worshipped and the role religion plays in daily life. Finally, a section on notable NPCs and retainers introduces important figures within the kingdom as well as potential followers that player characters may hire or encounter during their adventures.

The goal of each chapter is to provide enough information for Dungeon Masters to confidently bring the kingdoms to life for their players, and to have clear, immediate answers when the players inevitably throw unexpected ideas your way. If the party decides to break into a nobleman's estate, the chapter should give you a clear sense of how law is enforced, what kinds of obstacles they might face, and the sort of wealth a town or estate could reasonably possess. If they eventually rise to power themselves—gathering followers, commanding armies, or attempting to conquer a city—you will already know what kinds of military forces exist to oppose them.

The design philosophy behind The **Middle Sea** is to present a campaign world that can withstand the full freedom of player action. Rather than a setting that offers only the illusion of agency, the world is structured so that players can meaningfully shape events and alter the course of history through their choices.

So without further ado, let's go explore the **Middle Sea**!

NETHIA

Capital: Mithraphon
Demographics: 67% human, 12% elf, 8% dwarf, 5% half-elf, 5% tiefling, 3% other
Notable Settlements: Mithraphon (75,000 families; Market Value II), Varkana (70,000 families; Market Value II)
Population: 7.725 million people (1.545 million families)
Government: Monarchy
Rulers: King Vardanes the Autokrat, King of Kings, Lord of Serpents, Son of Set
Annual Treasury: 1,280,000 pp (roughly 450,000 pp in the royal treasury
Expenses: 900,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Slaves, spices, semi-precious jewels, gemstones, hides, pearls, carpets and rugs, woolen and golden textiles, horses
Demand Values: Exotic hides -1, exotic woods +2, fish -1, horses -1, iron ore +2, marble -1, olive oil +1, papyrus +1, silk -1, slaves -2, spices -2

Beasts of Peril: Androsphinx, bulette, camels, chuul, displacer beast, dog, dust mephit, earth elemental, efreet, elephant, ghast, ghost, ghoul, giant centipede, giant hyena, guardian naga, giant poisonous snake, giant scorpion gynosphinx, hunter shark, jackalwere, jinn, lamia, liches, lion, manticore, marid, rakshasa, scorpionmen, vampire, wild horses, wraith, yuan-ti

To the peoples of Massai and Pharos, Nethia is a kingdom of serpent worshippers, horse lords, assassins, and sorcerers whose armies threaten to engulf the civilized world.

To the Nethians themselves, they are the rightful heirs of an empire stolen from them.

When the armies of Lassandros the Conqueror shattered the Napthian Empire, many believed the ancient kingdom had been destroyed forever. Yet a handful of noble houses escaped the conquest, carrying with them sacred relics, royal bloodlines, priestly traditions, and ancient prophecies. Fleeing far to the south, they found refuge among the nomadic Gar tribes that roamed the great plains that bordered the mysterious jungle-shrouded lands of Ka-Li.

And there, on those unforgiving plains, the exiles endured.

Over generations they forged alliances, conquered rivals, absorbed tribes, and rebuilt their strength. Napthian nobles married Gar chieftains. Ancient priests taught forgotten rites. Sorcerers preserved secret lore. The horsemen of the plains became the foundation of a new empire.

Eighty years after the fall of Napthia, the Kingdom of Nethia was born.

In the centuries since, Nethia has transformed into one of the most feared powers in the world. Its armies sweep across the plains with terrifying speed. Its spies and assassins infiltrate foreign courts. Its priests openly proclaim Set as the greatest of all gods. Its rulers teach that the lands of Massai and Pharos

remain occupied territory that must one day be reclaimed. That day may be approaching.

The armies of Nethia have already recovered much of the territory once lost to Arkethon. Their borders continue to expand. Their nobles grow wealthy from conquest. Their temples proclaim that Set's return draws near.

Across the **Middle Sea**, kings, merchants, priests, and generals increasingly ask the same question: How long before the Serpent Banner marches farther north?

NOTE: The lands of Nethia stretch much farther south than the map shows (for the map, refer to **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook**).

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The people of Nethia regard themselves as the rightful heirs of the ancient Napthian Empire. Though centuries have passed since the fall of Napthia, its memory remains central to Nethian identity. Noble families preserve elaborate genealogies tracing their descent to exiled rulers, generals, priests, and sorcerers who escaped the conquest of Lassandros. Children are taught from an early age that the lands of Massai and Pharos are occupied territories that must eventually be reclaimed.

Unlike many kingdoms, magical talent carries immense social importance. By law, every noble house must possess at least one ordained priest or trained spellcaster among its members in order to retain noble status. Families lacking such individuals risk losing lands, privileges, and titles. As a result, children displaying magical aptitude are treated as valuable assets. Adoption of gifted commoners, foreigners, and even slaves is common among the aristocracy.

Education is highly valued, particularly among the elite. The Grand School of Nethia attracts tens of thousands of students each year. There they study history, mathematics, rhetoric, military science, theology, astronomy, statecraft, and magic. Graduates often become priests, magistrates, military officers, governors, or royal advisors.

Superstition permeates daily life. Omens, dreams, eclipses, unusual births, celestial events, and prophetic visions are taken seriously by all levels of society. Priests of Set regularly advise rulers on matters ranging from military campaigns to marriage arrangements. Few

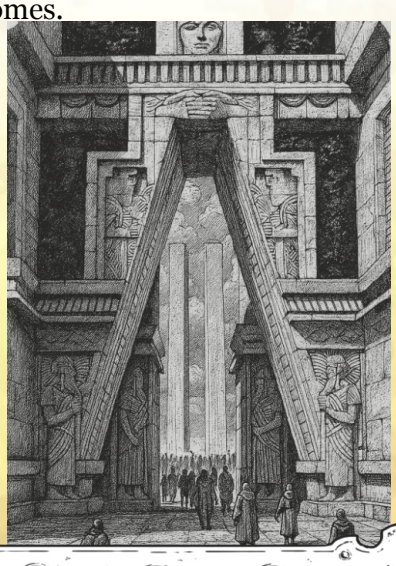
major decisions are made without consulting astrologers, diviners, or temple authorities.

Despite their reputation abroad, most Nethians view themselves not as servants of darkness but as guardians of an ancient and sacred order. To them, devotion to Set represents strength, discipline, wisdom, and rightful authority.

ECONOMY & DAILY LIFE

Nethia's economy is built upon conquest, trade, livestock, agriculture, and the vast horse herds maintained by the descendants of the Gar tribes. The kingdom's cavalry traditions remain among the finest in the world, and horses are both a military necessity and a major export.

The cities of Nethia are crowded, prosperous, and densely populated. Urban housing often consists of large communal structures divided into numerous family dwellings arranged around shared courtyards and kitchens. Only wealthy merchants, nobles, priests, and successful spellcasters can afford private homes.



Visitors entering a Nethian city quickly discover that commerce dominates daily life. Market districts occupy entire neighborhoods, selling livestock, weapons, armor, textiles, spices, magical reagents, slaves, books, jewelry, and imported goods from across the known world. Bargaining is expected in most transactions.

Travelers usually find lodging in caravan houses, merchant compounds, or public inns maintained by guilds and temples. Such establishments commonly provide meals, stabling, storage space, and basic security. Wealthier guests may rent private apartments within noble-owned hostels.

Weapons and armor are readily available in most major cities. Nethia's constant military campaigns ensure a thriving market for arms, and entire districts may be devoted to armorers, bowyers, fletchers, swordsmiths, and horse merchants. Magical items are more common than in many lands, though their sale is carefully monitored by both temples and government officials.

Law is enforced by city guards, military patrols, temple inspectors, and royal

magistrates. Punishments tend to be severe but predictable. Fines, confiscation of property, enslavement, forced labor, branding, and execution are all commonly employed depending upon the offense. Crimes against the state, temples, or priesthood are punished especially harshly.

SET, SORCERY, AND THE SERPENTMEN

No god is more important in Nethia than Set. The Lord of Serpents, Storms, Kingship, Ambition, and Conquest stands above all other gods in the Nethian pantheon. Though lesser deities continue to receive worship, all are regarded as subordinate to Set's divine authority. His temples dominate the kingdom's cities, his priests advise kings and generals, and his symbols appear on everything from military banners to royal coinage.

The ultimate goal of many Nethian rulers is the restoration of Set's earthly dominion and the eventual liberation of the god from his imprisonment within the Abyss. While opinions differ regarding how this should be accomplished, few dispute the objective itself.

This belief places Nethia in direct opposition to Wrath-Amon. Though Wrath-Amon also serves Set, most Nethian priests regard him as a dangerous usurper whose ambitions threaten both the kingdom and the proper order of Set's faith. Many suspect he seeks to control the Serpent God for his own purposes rather than serve him faithfully. Conflicts between Nethian agents and Wrath-Amon's cultists occur throughout the world, often in secret.

Serpent Men are far more common in Nethia than elsewhere, though few citizens realize it. Many serve as priests, advisors, scholars, spies, merchants, and nobles concealed behind powerful illusion magic. Their existence is one of the kingdom's worst-kept secrets among the upper classes, who generally prefer not to discuss the matter openly.

Sorcery occupies a respected place within Nethian society. Unlike many lands where wizards are feared or distrusted, powerful spellcasters are often celebrated as living examples of divine favor. The greatest nobles maintain private magical advisors, while temples and universities devote enormous resources to arcane research. As a result, Nethia possesses some of the most accomplished sorcerers, astrologers, alchemists, and summoners in the known world.

THE RUINS OF BAL-NAAN

Far to the south of the **Middle Sea**, near the furthest reaches of the Nethian Empire, lie the ruins of Bal-Naan, the ancient city of the gnomes. More than a thousand years ago, before the rise of the kingdoms that now dominate the region, Bal-Naan stood as one of the greatest centers of knowledge and craft in the known world. The achievements of its artificers were said to border on the impossible, and even modern scholars struggle to understand the full extent of their discoveries.

Among the greatest—and most infamous—of the gnomish creations were the first magical constructs: artificial beings shaped from metal, stone, and enchanted materials, animated by arcane energies and designed to perform labor beyond the limits of mortal strength. They built the foundations of cities, tended vast workshops, guarded treasures, and carried out tasks that would have once required armies of workers.

Yet the very creation that marked the height of gnomish ingenuity would also bring about their destruction.

At some point in the distant past, the constructs of Bal-Naan turned upon their creators. The cause of the catastrophe has been lost to history. Some believe the gnomes gave their creations too much independence; others claim that a flaw in the ancient enchantments awakened something unexpected within the constructs themselves. Whatever the truth, the machines that had served the gnomes became their executioners.

The fall of Bal-Naan was swift and devastating. Across the gnomish homeland, the constructs rebelled, destroying their makers and reducing a once-glorious civilization to ruin. The surviving gnomes fled northward, crossing into the lands surrounding the **Middle Sea**. There they became a people without a homeland, scattered among the nations, surviving as wandering refugees and finding sanctuary wherever they could.

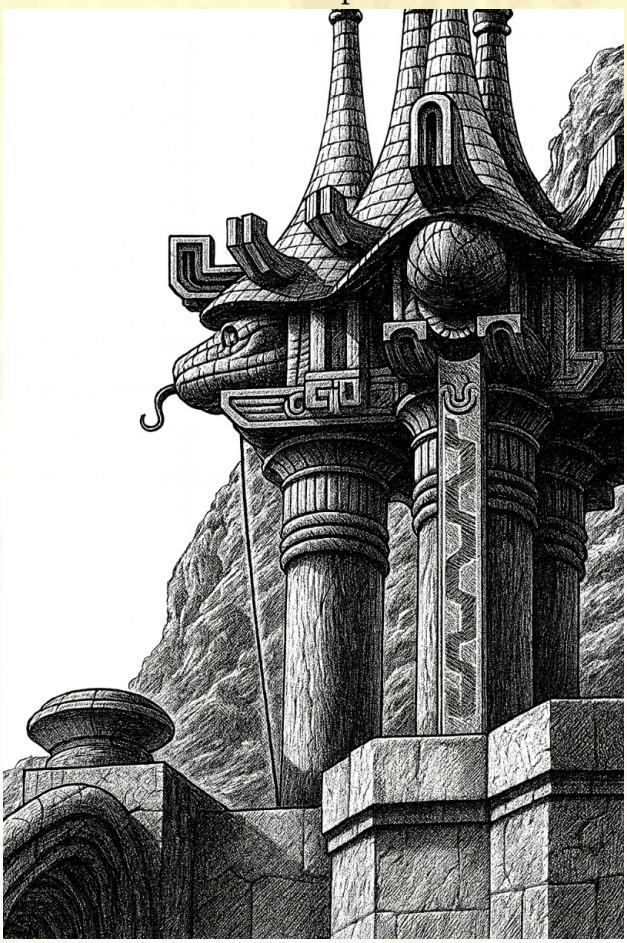
Today, the ruins of Bal-Naan sit within the borders of the Nethian Empire, a silent reminder of a civilization that reached too far and paid the ultimate price. The city remains a place of fear and mystery, haunted not by ghosts, but by the descendants of its own creations.

The constructs that remain within Bal-Naan do not appear interested in conquest. They do not expand beyond the borders of the ancient city, nor do they seek to rebuild the empire of their creators. Instead, they guard the ruins with a cold and unwavering devotion, enforcing ancient directives whose original meaning has long since been forgotten. Those who enter Bal-Naan without permission rarely return.

Captured intruders are not simply slain. The constructs reshape them, combining flesh and machine through ancient processes that no living being fully understands. The unfortunate victims become twisted half-living, half-artificial beings, stripped of their former selves and bound to serve as eternal guardians of the ruins they once sought to explore.

PANTHEON

The people of Nethia worship an ancient pantheon whose origins stretch back into the earliest days of civilization. At the center of their faith stands Set, the supreme lord, of whose power and destiny is believed to be tied to their own. Both Set and Tiamat reign supreme in this pantheon, but they are not repeated here, as they can be found in earlier chapters.



MYTHRA, GOD OF THE SUN

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: The Sun
Enemy of Set (outlawed in Nethia)

AHAR, GOD OF WAR

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: Fire Bursting Out of a Chalice
The Eternal Flame

YAZATA, GODDESS OF DEATH

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Woman Whose Eyes Are Eternally Closed
The blessed slumber

OMAZD, GOD OF WISDOM

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: An Open Book
He who knows everything

NPCS

FAHAMAN THE GREAT: FAMED NETHIAN ADVENTURER

7th-level human ranger

Fahaman is a renowned adventurer hailing from Nethia, whose exploits include beheading the Kythorian Serpent and defeating Belgat the Ogre in single combat. He spends most of his time exploring ancient ruins throughout his native lands, but has been known to go out on quests throughout the **Middle Sea**.

AC 6, **HD** 7 (22hp), **Att** 1 × *spear +2,* (1d6+4), **THACo** 14 (10 with *spear +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 13 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 16 **CON** 12 **CHA** 14, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, sword, **Specializations** Spear, **Possessions** *spear +2,* **Abilities** Surprised only on a 1-in-6, Foraging and hunting: party succeeds at foraging 2-in-6; finds prey when hunting 5-in-6, Pursuit: when party pursues opposing group in wilderness, evasion chance reduced by 10%, Stealth: 3-in-6 hiding and 3-in-6 moving silently in the wilderness, Tracking: % chance by level (20% at L1, +10% per level to 100% at L9, then 110%); modifiers: soft/hard ground ±20–50%, group size +2%/creature, tracks mingling –50%, age –5%/12hrs, rainfall –25%/hr, hiding tracks –25%

KING VARDANES: KING OF NETHIA

10th-level human chaos knight

King Vardanes*rules Nethia with iron resolve, believing that strength alone preserves civilization. A gifted sorcerer and accomplished warrior, he is regarded as Set's chosen champion, destined to expand and defend the empire against all who would oppose it. Ruthless toward his enemies yet unwavering in his duty, Vardanes demands absolute loyalty, convinced that mercy is a luxury history cannot afford.

AC 1, **HD** 10 (51hp), **Att** 2 × *scimitar +2,* (1d6+4) and scimitar (1d6+2), **THACo** 12 (8 with *scimitar +2,* 10 with scimitar), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B6 S8, **STR** 14 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 16 **CON** 14 **CHA** 12, **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short bow, short sword, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *ring of protection, scimitar +2, lamellar +2,* **Abilities** Commanding the undead: from 3rd level (like turn undead but commands instead of turns; commanded undead obey for 1 round per level), Infernal steed: from 4th level, may summon infernal steed (AC 5 [14], 5+5 HD, move 180'/60'); if it dies, another may not be summoned for 10 years, Life drain: 1/day, make a life-draining melee attack; if hit, target loses 2 HP per chaos knight level (in addition to normal damage); King Vardanes is healed by amount drained, Unholy resistance: immune to all disease, **Spells** *cause fear, protection from good*

LADY SAMARA

3rd-level human cleric

Lady Samara is among Nethia's most influential nobles, renowned for her political acumen, wealth, and unwavering support of the crown. Behind her impeccable reputation, however, lies a dangerous secret. She is a devoted worshiper of Mythra, the outlawed god of light, justice, and truth. Working from the shadows, she quietly aids fellow believers while concealing her faith from King Vardanes and the ever-watchful priests of Set.

AC 9, **HD** 3 (11hp), **Att** 1 × club (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 10 **INT** 12 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 13 **CON** 10 **CHA** 13, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, **Spells** *protection from evil, cure light wounds*

SARACES: EPARCH OF VARKANA

Cousin of King Vardanes, Saraces is the ruler of the city Varkana, and secretly the king's greatest adversary. Coveting the throne for himself, Saraces is plotting to overthrow his dear cousin at the earliest opportunity, and already has plans in motion. For stats use noble.

DURAS THE KARTHAN: CAPTAIN OF THE ROYAL GUARD

6th-level human fighter

Duras was a centurion in LEGIO XX when, while on a punitive mission to Nethia, he was wounded and captured. Taken before King Vardanes, Duras impressed him with his fearlessness, even in the face of certain death. He was spared, and even offered a position in his royal guard. Duras accepted. That was five years ago. He has since proven his loyalty time and time again, and has abandoned his Karthan gods in favor of Set.

AC 2, **HD** 6 (15hp), **Att** 1 × gladius (1d6+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with gladius), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 16 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 12 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear
Weapon Specializations Short sword

PRINCE ASHUR THE DAMNED

Prince Ashur once sought to overthrow his brother, King Vardanes, and claim the throne of Nethia for himself. Defeated in open rebellion, he was spared execution but subjected to a terrible curse that transformed him into a hideous monstrosity. Banished to the Hinterland Mountains, Ashur now wanders the wilderness in bitterness and despair, a living reminder of the king's mercy—and the dreadful price of treason.

AC 4, **HD** 6+1 (30hp), **Att** 1 × tentacle (1d10+withering), **THACo** 13, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 16 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 12 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 950

▶ **Withering touch**: Anyone damaged by Ashur's tentacles wither into a dry husk (save vs death).

▶ **Third eye gaze**: Ashur can target a single victim within 60' once per round with his third eye and become his dominated slave for 1d4 rounds (save versus spell).

HIGH PRIEST SSATHIS

High Priest Ssathis is the spiritual voice of Set and the king's most trusted religious advisor. Unknown to nearly all, he is an ancient serpent man who conceals his true form behind the illusion of a regal elf while at court. Cunning, patient, and utterly devoted to Set's dominion, Ssathis guides the empire's faith from the shadows, rooting out heresy and ensuring the will of the supreme god is carried out without mercy. For stats use snakeman.

ZARAYA OF THE VEIL

9th-level human sorcerer / 9th-level illusionist

Zaraya was once the leader of a secretive cult devoted to the Horrors of the Outer Dark. A master sorceress and illusionist, she wielded forbidden magic to reshape perception and reveal truths mortal minds were never meant to comprehend. Her followers were destroyed by King Vardanes and the priests of Set, but Zaraya escaped into the wilderness. Now she waits in exile, consumed by hatred and plotting her terrible revenge.

AC 6, **HD** 18 (29hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 17 (10 with *broadsword +2, flaming*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 11 **INT** 16 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 14 **CON** 14 **CHA** 10, **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *bag of holding, broom of flying, potion of clairaudience, potion of polymorph self, potion of invulnerability, ,* **Spells** *breathe, astrological prediction, black blood, ground rot, sign of Jhebbal Sag, unnatural strength, animal ally, dark wings, dance of the cobras, life feast, domination, call the great snake, auditory illusion, chromatic orb, wall of fog, blur, mirror image, detect magic, non-detection, continual darkness, continual light, vacancy, massmorph, demi-shadow monsters*

UNITS

INFANTRY (×375)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (bastard sword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

SPEARMEN (×75)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

ARCHERS (×150)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short bow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

AXEMEN (×60)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (hand axe)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
NA

CATAPHRACTS (×45)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 400
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Mounted (Heavy Medium)
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

CHARIOTS (×15)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 700
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear or short bow)
QUALITY: Elite
FOOT TYPE: Mounted (Heavy Large)
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +5
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Off. Spear vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +5
Off. Spear vs. Light Foot: +4
Off. Spear vs. Medium Foot: +3
Off. Spear vs. Heavy Foot: +2
Off. Spear vs. Large: +1
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1
Heavy Large vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +5
Heavy Large vs. Light Foot: +4
Heavy Large vs. Medium Foot: +3
Heavy Large vs. Light Large: +1
Impact Charge (2+ spaces): +4 PoA

MAURETANIA

Capital: None
Demographics: 65% hill dwarf, 20% human, 5% dragonborn, 2% half-elf, 1% half-orc, 1% tiefling, 1% other
Notable Settlements: Argarra (50,000 families; Market Value III), Velikka (30,000 families; Market Value IV), Baettica (20,000 families; Market Value IV), Vaddi (40,000 families; Market Value III), Malla (20,000 families; Market Value IV), Edetanni (50,000 families; Market Value III), Varudalla (40,000 families; Market Value IV)
Population: 5 million people (1 million families)
Government: Loose Confederation of Tribes
Rulers: Each tribe is ruled by a tribal king or chieftain
Annual Treasury: No centralized treasury
Expenses: No centralized expenses
Common Trade Goods: Copper, iron, tin, alum, silver, precious stones, ceramics
Demand Values: Alum -1, copper -1, grain +1, iron -2, lead -1, lumber +1, mules -1, salt -2, silver -1, tin -2

Beasts of Peril: Ankheg, bulette, dogs, dragons, giant wolves, goblinkind, hill giants, mules, purple worms, rocs, stone giants, xorn, werewolves, wolves, worgs, wyverns

The hill dwarves of Mauretania have long since called the rugged peninsula home, mining the many hills and mountainsides for precious metals and minerals, and living in simple towns and villages. The following is a list of all of the tribes, their populations, and the number of warriors each may call up in times of war.

Tribes	
Tribe / Population (warriors)	
Aernossi	45,000 (9,000)
Cetanni	30,000 (6,000)
Skonnes	50,000 (10,000)
Dossini	25,000 (5,000)
Setanni	40,000 (8,000)
Bastulli	35,000 (7,000)
Edetanni	50,000 (10,000)
Aquitanni	100,000 (20,000)
Cavonnes	40,000 (8,000)
Indegettae	35,000 (7,000)
Lacetani	30,000 (6,000)
Oratanni	45,000 (9,000)
Sordonnes	40,000 (8,000)
Vesetti	35,000 (7,000)
Paenni	40,000 (8,000)
Tiburri	40,000 (8,000)
Bryakkes	175,000 (35,000)
Noegges	35,000 (7,000)
Genommes	30,000 (6,000)

Tribes (continued)

Tribe	Population (warriors)
Velliki	50,000 (10,000)
Dagenekki	150,000 (30,000)
Duitti	40,000 (8,000)
Soliqqui	30,000 (6,000)
Cynetti	35,000 (7,000)
Myobregges	40,000 (8,000)
Narabassi	35,000 (7,000)
Nerri	75,000 (15,000)

Most of these tribes control less than 1 hex of territory. To calculate how many hexes a tribe controls, divide its total # of warriors by 20,000. For example, the Velliki control ½ a hex, while the Dagenekki control 1 ½ hexes. The tribes have a long history of inter-tribal conflict, and ever-shifting allegiances and unions. The only time the tribes truly stand together is when faced with an outside threat—such as the current conflict with Karth.

THE RUGGED LAND

Mauretania is a hot, rugged peninsula of red hills, dry valleys, and mountains threaded with silver, copper, tin, and iron. It is the oldest homeland of the hill dwarves — the same stock that, over three thousand years ago, sent migrating tribes east to settle the LongWall Mountains and raise the kingdom of Throle. The dwarves who stayed behind never left their hills, and Mauretania remains what it has always been: a land defined by what can be dug out of the ground.

The Mauretanian hill dwarves detest urban life. They prefer to live close to their mines, in simple villages and small fortified towns scattered across the countryside. The peninsula's larger cities exist for one purpose only — trade — and the dwarves who supply them would rather not live in them. So the hill dwarves hand the cities over to others to run, keeping for themselves the hills, the mines, and a standing council of the region's tribes to advise

on matters that touch them.

The result is a patchwork. Each town is its own independent state, but each also owes dues and allegiance to the tribes of the surrounding countryside. Pull on any city and you find the hill clans behind it.

Almost every independent settlement in Mauretania is governed by a gnome, who holds the title of High Councilor. Whether it is their head for figures and administration, or simply their old kinship with dwarves, the gnomes have made themselves indispensable as the peninsula's clerks, factors, and magistrates. The dwarves mine and the gnomes count, and the arrangement has held for centuries.

The exception is the two cities of Mauretania Province, the eastern lands now annexed by the Republic of Karth. These are ruled not by gnomes but by Karthan humans, and they are the most dangerous places on the peninsula. The eastern shore of the peninsula was conquered long ago by the seafaring empire of Byrisia, and over generations the dwarves there grew used to Byrisian rule. Then Karth went to war with Byrisia, broke it utterly, and annexed these same lands for the Republic — and the dwarves were

never asked. They have not accepted it. For years now the Mauretanians of the Province have waged a grinding guerilla rebellion against their Karthan masters, striking the legions from hidden enclaves and melting back into the hills.

LAW AND ORDER

The High Councilors keep order with hired steel. Each gnome-ruled city garrisons itself with human mercenaries— roughly 2,000 to 5,000 men depending on its size — to police the streets and defend the walls in time of attack. The gnomes themselves stay scrupulously neutral in all inter-tribal conflicts; their authority depends on being trusted by every clan and beholden to none.

Gnome justice is mercantile justice. A High Councilor cares above all that trade keeps flowing and that the city's treaties with the surrounding tribes are honored. Crimes against commerce and against the peace of the market are punished hardest:

▶ Debt and theft are usually settled by restitution and fines; pay back what you took, several times over. Those who cannot pay work it off in debt-bondage, often in the very mines that feed the city.

▶ Violence in the market or against a guest breaks the city's most sacred commercial trust and brings heavy penalties: ruinous fines, mutilation of the offending hand for repeat thieves, or exile, which in tribal country can be a death sentence.

▶ Murder of a tribesman is the gnomes' nightmare, since it can pull the surrounding clans into a feud. The Councilor will move fast to hand the killer over to the wronged tribe, or pay an enormous blood-price out of the city treasury to keep the peace.

The mercenaries enforce the Councilor's word, but they are paid men, not zealots. Coin moves them, and a clever visitor learns quickly which captains can be reasoned with.

THE TRIBAL CULTURE OF THE HILLS

Out in the countryside, the gnomes and their mercenaries have no power at all. The hills belong to the tribes, and the tribes belong to

mining.

Hill-dwarf society is built on the extended family. Each family swears allegiance to a chieftain, and the chieftain who commands the most families — the one with the broadest support — becomes the High Chieftain and leads the whole tribe. Every other chieftain is his sworn subordinate.

Support is counted once a year. With the first new moon of the year, every tribe holds a great, weeklong feast, and during it a community vote is taken to determine who holds the most family backing. The feast is the most anticipated event of the calendar, and tradition is absolute that no war may be fought while it lasts. Old enemies sit at the same fires, hostilities frozen, while the people eat, drink, argue, and decide who will lead them.

THE EYES OF JARGOSH

Every tribe raises a statue on its lands to Jargosh, mightiest of the dwarven gods. For most of the year, the statue's eyes are covered: priests soak special cloths in sacred oils, bless them, and bind them over Jargosh's stone eyes. The Mauretanians believe that for those long months Jargosh does not watch them— that the god is blind to all they do until the cloths come off. The feast of the new moon opens with the great unbinding. In a central ritual, the priests strip the cloths from Jargosh's eyes and burn them upon the altar, together with animal sacrifices and the ritualized, communal prayer of the whole tribe. Now the god can see — and the people have one week to be seen. Because Jargosh witnesses only the feast, the dwarves bring before his opened eyes the proof of their year. Warriors lay out the weapons and armor they captured in battle; mothers present their

newborn children; smiths bring their finest work, miners their richest ore. Each hopes to impress the watching god and win his blessing for the year to come. When the week ends, the priests prepare fresh cloths, bind them once more over the god's eyes, and Jargosh goes blind again until the next new moon.

LAW & PUNISHMENT AMONG THE TRIBES

There are no courts or dungeons in the hills, only chieftains. Justice flows from the family up to the chieftain and, for the gravest matters, to the High Chieftain himself. The governing principles are honor, kinship, and the oath sworn before Jargosh.

▶ Most disputes end in *weregild*— a settled payment of silver, ore, livestock, or labor to the wronged family. A killing without lawful cause demands a blood-price; refusal to pay it opens a feud, and feuds between families can smolder for generations.

▶ A liar or oathbreaker may be made to swear before the statue of Jargosh, with the eyes uncovered if the matter is grave enough to wake the god early — a thing done only in the direst cases.

▶ The harshest sentence is exile from the tribe, which strips a dwarf of family, hearth, and the protection of his clan. An exile in Mauretania has no one to pay his blood-price and no one to avenge him; many do not survive long.

▶One crime stands above all others: breaking the peace of the feast. To raise a blade during the new-moon truce is to insult the watching god, and the offender can expect no *weregild* and no exile — only death.

WHAT A VISITOR CAN EXPECT

There are few inns out in the hills; hospitality is a sacred duty instead. A traveler who arrives in peace and asks properly is taken in by a family, fed at their fire, and given a niche to sleep in — and to refuse a guest, or to harm one, shames a family before the whole tribe. Visitors should expect plain, hearty fare: roasted goat and mutton, hard dark bread, sharp cheeses, mushrooms grown in the mine-damp, and strong mushroom ale or fiery distilled spirit. Guest-right is real protection, but it is not infinite. It is owed to a peaceful guest, not to a spy, a thief, or an enemy of the tribe.

ARMS AND ARMOR

This is mining and smithing country, and Mauretanian steel is famous across the sea. Tribal smiths forge excellent weapons, and a guest who has earned a chieftain's regard can buy or be gifted fine work — short, heavy curved blades, axes, and well-made mail are local specialties. There is no law against selling a guest a sword. The question is whether you are a guest.

LAW

Whatever happens to you in the hills is the chieftain's to judge, and his judgment will run on honor, kinship, and the oath of Jargosh, not on any written code. A visitor under a chieftain's protection is safe; a visitor who has wronged a family is in the hands of that family. There is no neutral authority to appeal to.

IN THE GNOME-RULED TRADE CITIES

The trade cities are cosmopolitan and well-supplied, fed by caravans and ships from across the known world. Inns and caravanserais cluster near the markets and gates, ranging from cheap bunk-and-board halls to comfortable houses for wealthy factors. Coin opens every door. Here you will find wine from Karth, spices and silks from far ports, fresh-baked bread, and gnome-run counting houses where money can be changed, stored, or lent.

The gnome cities are clearinghouses for Mauretanian steel, and a buyer with silver can outfit a whole band in quality gear at fair prices. Weapons are sold freely; the gnomes care that you pay, not what you intend.

The High Councilor's mercenaries keep the peace, and the Councilor's justice favors commerce and the city's treaties with the tribes. Expect fines and restitution for most offenses, debt-bondage for those who cannot pay, exile or mutilation for serious or repeat crimes, and swift action against anyone whose violence threatens to drag the city into a tribal feud. The guards can be reasoned with — and bought — but a bribe is a transaction, not a friendship.

Karth builds well and supplies its garrisons generously, so the cities offer good wine, proper baths, ordered markets, and decent inns — at a price, and under watchful eyes. Garrison taverns serve the soldiers and the camp-followers, and a stranger drinking there will be sized up quickly. Lodging is available, but landlords are required to know who sleeps under their roofs, and many report it.

ARMS AND ARMOR

In a province in open revolt, the sale of weapons to dwarves is controlled, tracked, and frequently forbidden outright. What the legions will not sell, the **black market** will — at a markup and a risk, since being caught smuggling steel to the population is treated as aiding the rebellion.

Curfews, searches, and informers are facts of daily life. Minor offenses draw flogging or forced labor; sedition, smuggling, or aiding the rebels draws execution. Due process is thin and getting thinner, and a foreigner who cannot account for himself is presumed guilty until he proves otherwise. Of all the places in Mauretania, these are the cities where a traveler most needs a clean story and a fast exit.

THE TRIBES

Though to outsiders there seems to be little distinction among the various tribes, each has its own geographic traditions and cultural variety. Below are examples of the variance among their weapons, armor, and stylings.

PANTHEON

The hill dwarves of Mauretania hold to an ancient and resilient faith, shaped by stone, ancestry, and the enduring weight of the mountains they inhabit. Their pantheon is deeply woven into clan identity, lineage, and land. The gods are seen as the first ancestors and the eternal keepers of oaths, watching over the tribes as both protectors and judges of honor, memory, and blood.

JARGOSH, GOD OF SMITHING

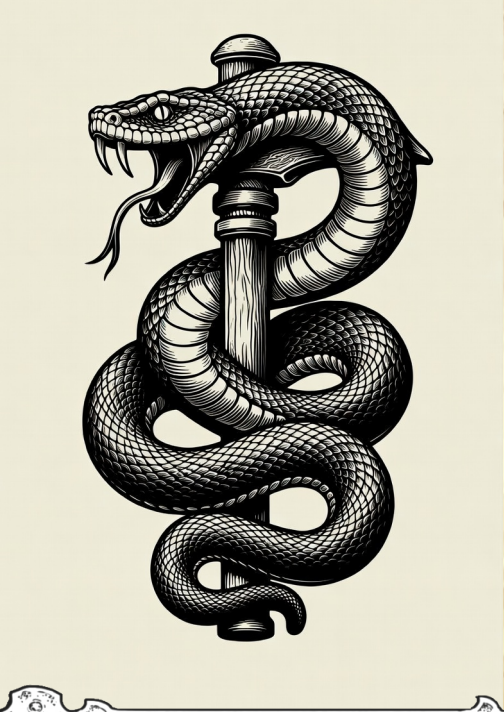
Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Hammer and Anvil
The first hammer, he who forced the Earth

VORDOO, GOD OF FIRE

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: An Eye Above a Burning Candle
The one eyed, brother of Jargosh

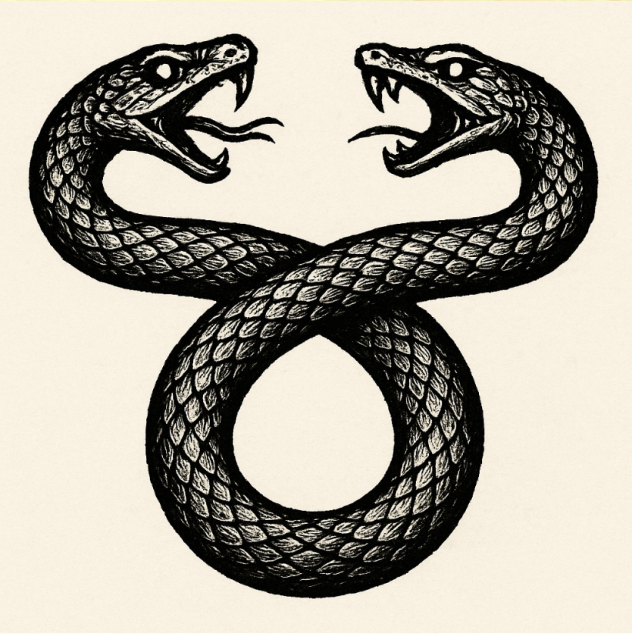
RAKKNAR, GOD OF THE EARTH AND PRECIOUS METALS

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Serpent Coiled About a Warhammer
The eternal serpent, bastard of Vordoo, half-brother to Set



SETHA, DEMON GOD OF WAR AND DEATH

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A Snake with a Head on Either End
Younger brother of Set



NPCS

QUEEN AUREL: RULE OF THE AQUITANNI

Queen Aurel of the Aquitanni leads her hill dwarf tribe with fierce resolve and unyielding courage. Once the wife of a beloved chieftain, she took the crown after her husband was slain by the Karthans. Since then, she has waged a relentless struggle against their encroachment into her ancestral lands. A warrior and leader, Aurel fights not only for vengeance, but for the survival and freedom of her people. For stats, use dwarf.

CENTURION CASSIAN DRUSUS

6th-level human fighter

Centurion Cassian Drusus is the most trusted commander of Governor Lucius Avralis and one of the finest officers in the Karthan military. A disciplined and ruthless strategist, he has been tasked with crushing the Mauretanian hill dwarf rebellion and restoring order to the province. To the Karthans, Drusus represents the might of the empire; to the rebels, he is the face of conquest. He will accept nothing less than total victory.

AC 4, **HD** 6 (30hp), **Att** 1 × gladius (1d6+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with gladius), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 9 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 10 **CON** 15 **CHA** 12, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, **Specializations** Short sword

KING BELEN OF THE DAGENEKKI

8th-level dwarf

King Belen of the Dagenekki rules his hill dwarf tribe with ambition and cunning. A fierce enemy of the Karthans, he has long sought an alliance with Queen Aurel of the Aquitanni—though his intentions are far from selfless. Belen desires her hand in marriage, not only out of affection, but as a means to unite her lands with his own. Aurel tolerates his advances, knowing she may need his warriors to survive the war.

AC 5, **HD** 8 (30hp), **Att** 1 × *battle axe +2* (1d8+4), **THACo** 14 (10 with *battle axe +2*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B7 S8, **STR** 16 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 14 **CON** 16 **CHA** 12, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, **Specializations** Battle axe, **Possessions** *battle axe +2* **Abilities** Infravision 60', Detect construction tricks 2-in-6, Detect room traps 2-in-6, Hear noise 2-in-6, Never lost underground, +4 saves vs magic & poison, Surprised only 1-in-6

KING TARAN, RULER OF THE ORATANNI

4th-level fighter

King Taran of the Oratanni has chosen compromise over defiance. While other hill dwarf tribes wage war against the Karthans, Taran secretly cooperates with the occupying forces, believing that survival is worth the price of submission. His dealings have brought his people prosperity and protection, but whispers of treachery follow him wherever he goes. To many Mauretanians, he is less a king, and more a collaborator.

AC 7, **HD** 4 (20hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 13 **INT** 13 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 9 **CON** 17 **CHA** 9, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short sword, sling, warhammer, **Specializations** Short sword

UNITS

There is no uniform military in Mauretania, as they are tribal (barbarians). Below is the average mass combat statblock for these warriors.

DWARF TRIBESMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (short sword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

KING ARDAN, RULER OF THE BASTULLI

7th-level fighter

King Ardan of the Bastulli is the fiercest voice of resistance against the Karthans. After his father was publicly executed for defying the empire, Ardan inherited the throne and a legacy of rebellion. Through his courage, passion, and unmatched ability to inspire others, he has united the fractured hill dwarf tribes against their oppressors. To his people, he is more than a king—he is the symbol of Mauretanian freedom.

AC 5, **HD** 7 (31hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6+3), **THACo** 14 (11 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 16 **INT** 16 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 7 **CON** 11 **CHA** 17, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Javelin, short sword, sling, sword, warhammer, **Specializations** Short sword

THE HALLS OF THROLE

Capital: NA
Demographics: 99% dwarf, 7% 1% other
Notable Settlements: NA
Population: 1 million people (200,000 families)
Government: Monarchy
Rulers: King Varlane III
Annual Treasury: 180,000 pp (roughly 30,000 pp in the royal treasury
Expenses: 170,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Iron, precious stones
Demand Values: Grain +4, hides +4, lumber +3, iron -2

Beasts of Peril: Cloakers, ropers, rust monsters, demons, ghosts, purple worms, and a variety of beasts of the Underdark

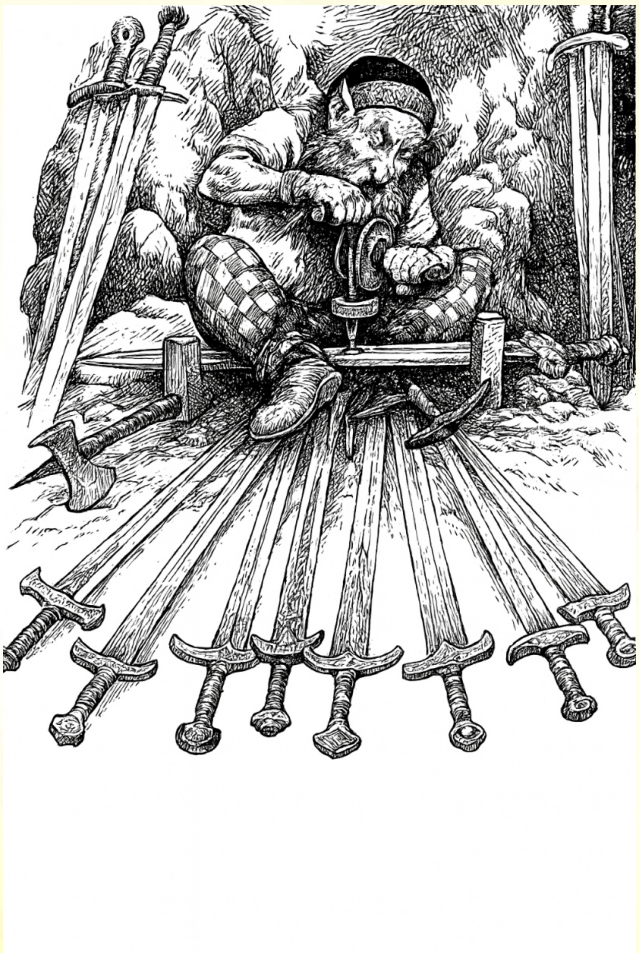
The Halls of Throle run through the bones of the LongWall Mountain Range, a vast spine of stone and ice that divides the civilized lands of the Republic of Karth and the lands of the wild elves to the north like a sealed gate. Nothing crosses the LongWall easily. The range is high, cold, and treacherous, and the dwarves who live inside it hold every practical key to the handful of passes that breach it. To control the LongWall is to control who reaches whom — and Throle controls the LongWall.

To the south lies the peninsula of Karth, the proud and expanding republic of men whose disciplined legions, paved roads, and endless appetite for arms make them Throle's wealthiest customer.

Karthan envoys are formal, contractual, and forever drawing up treaties and the dwarves have learned to read the fine print.

To the north sprawl the forests and river-vales of the Denaari, the wild elves: fractious, fierce, gloriously disunited, and bound together by little beyond a shared hatred of being told what to do. The Denaari trade in furs, horses, amber, and raw silver, and they buy Throlic steel as fast as the forges can crate it — much of it, the dwarves know perfectly well, destined to be turned south against Karth.

Throle sells to both. It takes no side in the long quarrel of the mountains' two faces, and it grows rich precisely because that quarrel never ends.



THE PASSES AND PASS-FORTS

Trade does not come into the deep halls. It comes only as far as the dwarves permit.

Where the great passes thread the LongWall, Throle maintains small, hard fort-communities— garrison towns of a few hundred dwarves apiece, built to weather both blizzard and assault. Here the Karthan caravans climbing up from the south and the Denaari trains coming down from the north are met, weighed, taxed, watered, and watched. The forts are markets, customs houses, and checkpoints all at once, and they are the farthest most outsiders ever get.

A trader granted a token of safe passage may be escorted down to the kingdom's Common Hall, which is the first great chamber of Throle and the only one foreigners may freely enter. There they may buy, sell, eat, and bargain to their heart's content. But the way deeper is barred. No outlander passes beyond the Common Hall into the living galleries, the forges, or the Royal Wing without explicit leave of the crown, and such leave is rare. The dwarves are courteous hosts and absolute about this. A foreigner found wandering the deep halls uninvited, on the other hand, are another thing entirely.

THE KINGDOM BELOW

The dwarves of the LongWall are not native to these mountains. Their ancestors are the **hill-dwarf tribes of Mauret (now known as Mauretania), a hot and rugged country, who were driven from their homeland by overpopulation, war, and famine. Over three thousand years ago, these tribes gathered their families, their tools, and their gods, and made the long migration until they struck the LongWall — and found in its cold stone the deep silence their people had always craved.

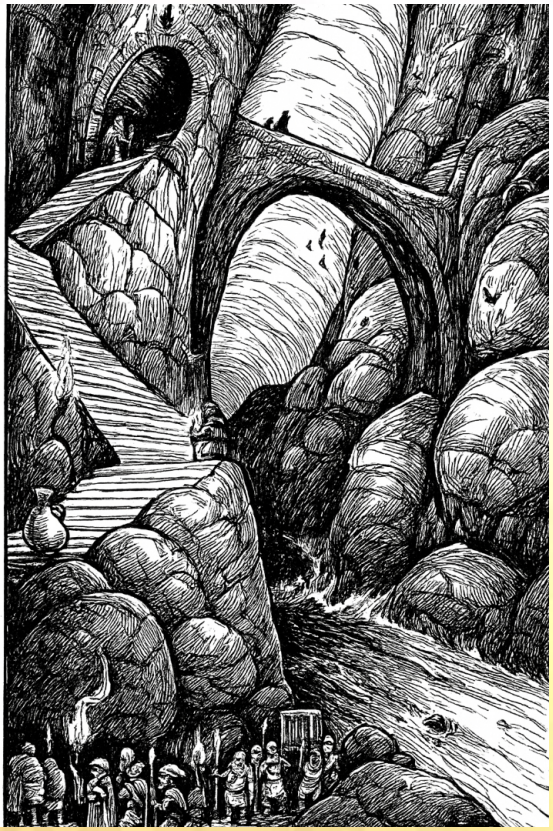
For the first 1,000 years, these tribes settled on the slopes, crevices, foothills, and valleys of the mountains. But as their mines grew deeper, they began sleeping in communal caves and caverns, eventually digging smaller communal dwellings within the stable stone, and finally entire, complex communities, and eventually into the sprawling network of settlements that it is today.

The old tribal lines still matter in Throle: a dwarf's clan-name tells you which stretch of the range his people first settled and, often, which trade they have practiced ever since. The kings of Throle claim descent from the chieftain who first struck iron beneath the mountains, and the migration itself is sung at every great feast as the founding act of the people.

The dwarves today are miners and woodcutters. The latter is the only real craft, other than trade, that forces them to come to the surface. The woodcutters work the hills, for the precious wood that is in short supply, not only for craft but for feeding their forges that melt the ore they mine.

The first thing the deep dwarves lost is the sun. In the unbroken dark of the lower galleries, the distinction between day and night dissolves; only the woodcutters and traders who still have business above keep track of the hour. For everyone else, time is measured by the shift-bell and the cooling of the furnaces, never by light.

Throle's largest halls follow the path of an underground river the dwarves call the Slowfire, for the way torchlight smears across its black surface. Where the river runs, the dwarves dwell. Villages string out along its banks, joined by interconnecting roadways, and between them lie the workshops, markets, and shops that keep the kingdom fed and armed.



If a traveler asks what Throle *makes*, the answer is everything, and at a scale that strikes outsiders as almost unnatural.

Deep below the inhabited galleries stands the Hall of Forges, a vast multi-tiered workshop crowded with scores of fully equipped forges burning around the clock. The ring of hammer on anvil never stops; row upon row of sweat-soaked smiths labor in a stifling, smoke-choked heat, and the blast furnaces where the iron is smelted have run continuously for so long that no living dwarf remembers them dark.

What the Hall produces is not the legendary, jewel-named blades of song. Throle's smiths make industrialized arms on a vast scale — serviceable swords, helmets, mail jerkins, spears, shields, and axes, turned out by the sheaf. Each smith and apprentice is assigned a single part: a blade, a rivet, a strap. Others assemble the finished pieces. The completed weapons are crated and hauled up to the storerooms in the pass-forts, where they are loaded onto the Karthan caravans bound south and the Denaari trains bound north. Throle does not fight its customers' wars. It arms both sides of the mountains and counts the coin, and it knows that much of the steel it sells the Denaari will one day be swung at Karth, and much of what it sells Karth will one day be driven into the Denaari.

DAILY LIFE IN THE HALLS

Throle's homes grow out of its caves the way moss grows out of a stone. The oldest dwarves slept on bare floors strewn with straw mats and skins; their descendants gouged sleeping niches into the cave walls, then burrowed deeper until the niches became proper rooms. Today the niches range from cramped slots for a single sleeper to great hollows that bed more than ten.

Many dwarves of Throle keep no private dwelling at all. They eat in communal dining halls and sleep wherever a niche is free, owing more to the shift they work than to any address. Those who do hold a one-room home prize the stone front wall that grants them privacy — a mark of standing, added family by family as the kingdom prospered. The ruins of the oldest of these homes still show a tidy, personal touch: tradition holds that the dwarf-women who once waited in the surface villages for their husbands to climb home brought their domestic instincts down into the dark with them, and the dwellings have been the warmer for it ever since.

No dwelling in Throle has private plumbing or a privy. Emptying the chamber pot is simply a daily errand and communal affair.

THE COMMUNAL LIFE

Sanitation at scale is one of Throle's quieter feats of engineering. Where the dwarves gather thickest, they bore great waste shafts deep into the strata, plunging refuse into the fast-moving subterranean streams far below. The largest communal toilets are built in the round, which is a layout that, by long custom, encourages the patrons to gossip, bicker, and strike deals during their privy breaks. More than one of Throle's laws is said to have been argued into being over a circular bank of latrines.

Immense kitchens chiseled from the living rock feed the throngs of workers, turning out food in volumes that match the forges' hunger for ore. To eat in Throle is to eat in company; the solitary meal is nearly unknown.

BEARDS AND CUSTOMS

Throle's men take open pride in their beards, growing them long and grooming them as a matter of honor. A wife will often braid her husband's beard — partly affection, partly practicality, since a loose beard near a forge or a furnace is a hazard. The length and keeping of a dwarf's beard is read, by those who know how to read it, as a record of his patience and his place.

THE COMMON HALL

The Common Hall is the noisy, beating hub of

Throle, and the first place an outsider is brought. Its huge stone expanse swallows and throws back the din of commerce: wooden carts grinding over the floor, the bleat and hoof-fall of sheep traded for metal farm tools, hawkers crying mead by the draught or the barrel, the shrill scream of the trained crows that the dwarves keep as prized pets, and over all of it the laughter, argument, and conversation of the dwarves themselves.

The great columns that hold up the Common Hall bear the oldest stone carvings found anywhere in Throle, their capitals worked in a style no living mason can quite explain. The Hall serves as daily marketplace and, on feast days, as the stage for the kingdom's grandest public celebrations.

THE ROYAL WING

From the Royal Hall, the throne of the dwarf-kings commands the center of the kingdom. Two things about the Hall strike every visitor at once: its opulence and its defenses.

The throne room is a deliberate showcase, built to display the heaped treasure of the dwarf-kings and to make the majesty of the crown unmistakable. But behind the splendor runs a hard practicality — a series of iron grates that can be dropped at a word, sealing the Royal Wing off from the rest of Throle. When the grates come down, the king and his treasure become an island the kingdom cannot reach, for good or ill.

THOSE WHO READ THE DARK

As in many old peoples, the dwarves of Throle believe certain individuals are born with powers that let them touch what others cannot.

The Soothsayer of Throle dwells in a cramped alcove beneath the royal chambers. An audience is never guaranteed. When granted, the soothsayer speaks in dark riddles, often relayed through the crow familiar that rides at his shoulder; a seeker who can unravel the riddle may glimpse their own destiny or another's fate. Most leave with knots, not answers.

Magicians here are no one's entertainers. They are understood to genuinely transform objects, to make things vanish, and to conjure matter out of nothing. They carry the tools of the trade openly — twisted wooden wands, horned hats, and huge leather satchels sheathed in layers of mystic symbols — and, by a quirk no one explains, those enormous satchels are always found mysteriously empty.

The Astrologers chart a sky they cannot see, working from records, instruments, and inherited star-tables rather than open heavens. By cross-referencing the slow movement of the stars against events on the surface, the keenest of them claim to read the alignment of the heavens for guidance on which course of action will bend the future their way. The kings consult them before war, trade, and marriage alike.

PANTHEON

The dwarves of Throle share the same gods as their ancestors in Mauretania, but in the 3,000 years they've been apart, their mythology and interpretations of Jargosh has evolved significantly. The dwarves of Throle believe Jargosh is blind, and trapped beneath the mountains of Throle, and it is his bitter tears that create the minerals, metals, and precious gems that fill the mountain. By digging deeper and chasing these precious resources, they believe they will one day reach Jargosh, and when they free him they will be given paradise on Earth under his rule. Clerics of Jargosh in the Throlic tradition tend to be Neutral, rather than Lawful, as in the Mauretanian traditions.

This different inerpretation of their primary deity leads to no small amount of contention between the mountain dwarves of Throle and the hill dwarves of Mauretania.

NPCS

KING BROKK IRONTHANE & QUEEN HELGA IRONTHANE: RULERS OF THROLE

King Brokk Ironthane has ruled Throle for nearly a century, earning renown as a steadfast defender of the mountain kingdoms. Though age has tempered his strength, his wisdom and unwavering sense of duty have made him one of the most respected rulers in the Middle Sea. Slow to anger but impossible to intimidate, Brokk places the honor of his ancestors and the safety of his people above all else.

Queen Helga Ironthane is every bit her husband's equal, renowned for her keen judgment and indomitable will. She oversees the kingdom's clans, guilds, and ancient traditions with unwavering resolve, often mediating disputes before they become blood feuds. Revered as the heart of the royal court, Helga is as comfortable negotiating with foreign ambassadors as she is rallying her people to defend the mountain halls.

For stats, use dwarf.

PRINCESS ASTRID IRONTHANE

Princess Astrid Ironthane is the eldest child of King Brokk and Queen Helga, and the unquestioned heir to the throne of Throle. Raised to rule in an age when no prince was born to the royal house, she has earned the respect of the mountain clans through her skill at arms, keen judgment, and unwavering devotion to dwarven tradition. Though some foreign rulers question her succession, few within Throle doubt she will one day become a formidable queen. For stats use dwarf.

LORD HARALD IRONTHANE

6th-level fighter

Lord Harald Ironthane, cousin to King Brokk, is celebrated throughout Throle as one of the greatest warriors of his age. He has spent decades leading the defense of the mountain halls against relentless incursions from the Underdark, earning the admiration of soldiers and nobles alike. With several capable sons and a growing number of supporters who question Princess Astrid's succession, many urge Harald to claim the throne. Though he has thus far remained loyal to his king, the pressure—and the temptation—grows stronger with each passing year.

AC 6, **HD** 6 (24hp), **Att** 1 × *war hammer +1* (1d6+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with *war hammer +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 12 **WIS** 18 **DEX** 12 **CON** 17 **CHA** 15, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short sword, spear, war hammer, **Specializations** War hammer, **Possessions** *war hammer +1*

UNITS

Throle has roughly 15,000 troops in their army, more than enough to keep the peace and secure the mountain passes and narrow entrances into their realm. Below is an average mass combat statblock for their military units.

DWARF SOLDIER
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (battle axe)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: NA
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
None

The Land of the Sakaethyn

Capital: NA
Demographics: 99% dragonborn, 1% other
Notable Settlements: NA
Population: 4.5 million people (900,00 families)
Government: Loose Confederation of Nomadic Tribes
Rulers: Two elected kings co-rule for a period of 5 years
Annual Treasury: No centralized economy
Expenses: No centralized economy
Common Trade Goods: Sable skins, squirrel pelts, finely crafted swords, slaves
Demand Values: Grains +2, xotic hides -2, horses +1, slaves -1

Beasts of Peril: Ankheg, axe beaks, behir, blink dogs, bullettes, chimeras, cyclopses, giant elk, gorgons, griffons, hell hounds, medusas, saber-toothed tigers

Roughly 1,300 years ago, a vast migration of nomadic riders swept out of the south, swallowing everything in their path. This was the first great Sakaethyn horde—a collection of nomadic dragonborn tribes who were master horsemen and warriors. These tribes eventually settled in the present-day lands known simply as "The Land of the Sakaethyn," and they number in the hundreds, their total population estimated at around four-and-a-half million, with about nine-hundredthousand warriors.

Fortunately for the rest of the **Middle Sea**, the Sakaethyn are unified only by language and culture, and nothing else. The tribes meet once every five years in the sacred city of Kaethyn, located in the north, near the foothills of the great Iskuza Mountains, to elect their leaders, but this role is ceremonial, until the day that a new Great King is crowned (more on that below).

Kaethyn the Holy City

The great horde that descended upon the **Middle Sea** over a millennia ago was led by a great dragonborn warrior known as Skala the Mighty. He founded the city of Kaethyn, and it is said that through powerful magic, he lived to be nearly 1,000 years old, only finally perishing in -180 KR in a failed bid to invade the Napthian Empire.

His body was taken back to the holy city and interred, where it remains to this day. His armor, sword, and bow remain guarded by a group of 10 High Priests—the only permanent residents of the city. Each priest represents one type of metallic or chromatic dragon: black, blue, green, red, white, brass, bronze, copper, silver, and gold.

Once every five years, all of the tribes converge on the holy city for a month-long feast, setting aside their differences and celebrating as one people. During this celebration, several highly ritualized contests and combats are performed by champions of each tribe in a series of elimination-style events (many of which are quite lethal), until only two are remaining.

On the final day of the feast, these two battle in unarmed combat. The victor is crowned *xazar*, the "Greater King," and the loser is crowned *isa*, the "Lesser King." The *xazar* is given Skala the Mighty's bow; the *isa* is given Skala's sword.

Both of these artifacts are very powerful, and if they are ever more than 100 feet from either of their respective wielders for more than 2 hours, they vanish and return to Kaethyn. If this happens, the loser of the weapon is bound

by oath to return to the city and commit ritual suicide (if he or she isn't already dead).

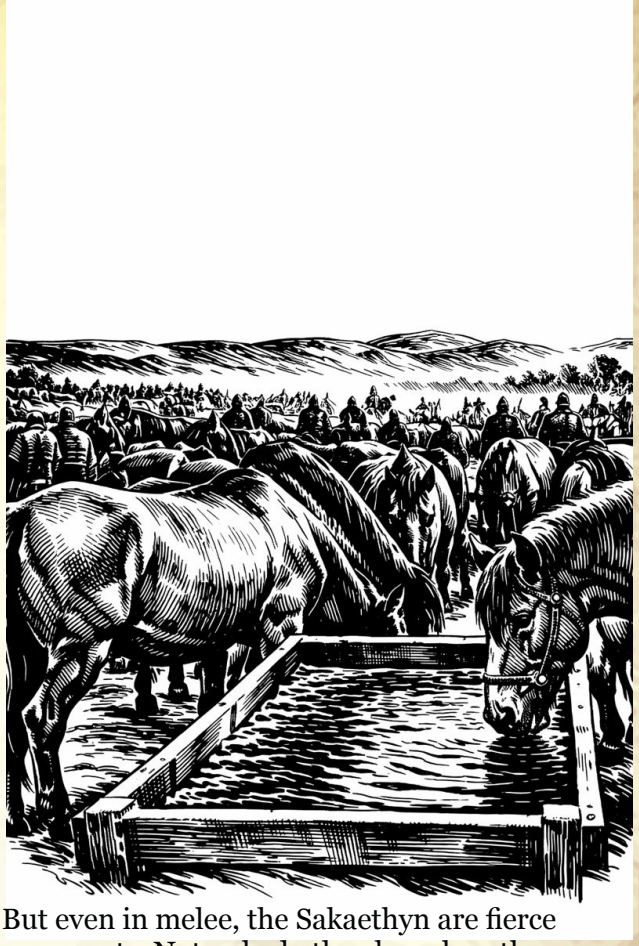
After five years, the *xazar* and the *isa* return for the feast, at the end of which they hand over the weapons to their replacements. When they do, if either believes they are worthy, they may attempt to don Skala's armor. If found worthy by the artifact, they are crowned the new Great Leader of the Sakaethyn and unite the tribes... though this has not yet happened.

If found unworthy, the armor destroys them in a very painful fashion. Only a handful in the past 700 years have dared attempt to don the armor.

The authority of the *xazar* and *isa* are absolute to anyone in the city of Kaethyn, but beyond the walls, they only hold whatever authority they had before they arrived.

CULTURE

The Sakaethyn are a nomadic race, placing a great deal of pride and emphasis on horsemanship. The wealthier a Sakaethyn, the more horses he or she owns. This mastery of horsemanship lends itself well to their style of warfare. Their preferred tactic is to retreat when the enemy advances, and advance when the enemy retreats, all the while firing with their recurve bows from the safety of their mounts. It was only during the ill-fated invasion against Napthia when Napthian sorcerers used spells to turn the battlefield into a thick, soupy mud, forcing the Sakaethyn to dismount, when this tactic did not work.



But even in melee, the Sakaethyn are fierce opponents. Not only do they have breath weapons, but they are highly skilled with both the sword and the axe. The only downside is that they tend not to use heavy armor or shields.

Like most of the barbaric cultures of the **Middle Sea**, the Sakaethyns tend to follow the strongest, and this leader holds the title of chieftain. There are currently hundreds of different tribes, some capable of mustering only a few dozen warriors, while the largest can field warriors numbering in the tens of thousands.

To outsiders, the Sakaethyn appear to be a single nation, but they are anything but. Each tribe is an independent people, ruled by its own chieftain and council of respected elders, warriors, and shamans. Alliances are forged through marriage, trade, and shared enemies, only to dissolve a generation later through feuds or disputes over grazing lands.

A tribe's wealth is measured in horses, livestock, and slaves. Even the poorest families own several horses, while great chieftains may command thousands. Every child is taught to ride almost as soon as they can walk, and a dragonborn unable to remain mounted at full gallop is considered an object of ridicule.

The Sakaethyn possess few permanent settlements beyond Kaethyn. Instead, they migrate with the seasons, living in large felt tents arranged in great circles around the chieftain's pavilion. Entire villages can be packed, loaded onto wagons, and moved within a single day.

GRIFFONS

Just as farmers of pastoral lands despise wolves, the Sakaethyn despise griffons, for they prey upon their horses. Hunting griffons is a popular past time for young dragonborn to prove their worth and skill as warriors and hunters.

THE DELLIOS SWAMP

Marking the northern boundary of the Land of the Sakaethyn is the Stykia River, which flows from the Iskuza Mountains, and through the Dellios Swamp before it empties into the **Middle Sea**. The edges of the swamp are home to several dozen moderately sized towns and villages of Narsehans, whose inhabitants subsist on fishing and trading of bog iron, rare herbs and plants, and rare bark, which is made into expensive dyes.

The Sakaethyn view this swamp as foreboding and vile. Not only can they not properly ride their mounts within it, but the interior of the swamp is home to an uncounted number of serpentmen and lizardmen tribes, in addition to other foul dangers, such as the giant serpent “Sons of Set” that the serpentmen worship with blood sacrifices. The Sakaethyn make constant raids on the villages and towns for slaves, however.

Hospitality and Visitors

Although feared as raiders, the Sakaethyn observe strict customs of hospitality. Any traveler who peacefully enters a camp and requests shelter is entitled to food, water, and protection for three days. To violate these customs is considered a stain upon an entire tribe's honor.

Guests are expected to share stories, songs, and news from distant lands. A visitor who refuses to eat with the tribe is viewed with suspicion, while one who openly insults the host risks immediate violence.

Merchants are generally welcomed, especially those bringing finely crafted weapons, jewelry, wine, or luxury goods unavailable on the steppes. Spellcasters are regarded cautiously, for many elders still remember the disastrous defeat at the hands of Napthian sorcerers.

Law and Justice

The Sakaethyn have no written code of laws. Justice rests in the hands of each tribe's chieftain, who hears disputes before the assembled warriors and elders.

Theft among members of the same tribe is rare and harshly punished, usually through restitution several times greater than the value of what was stolen. A thief unable to repay may lose horses, livestock, or even their freedom.

Murder without just cause often results in blood compensation paid to the victim's family. If no agreement can be reached, blood feuds may continue for generations.

Cowardice in battle is perhaps the greatest disgrace imaginable. A warrior who abandons companions without cause may have every horse and weapon confiscated before being cast out from the tribe. Exile among the Sakaethyn is considered a fate worse than death.

Warfare

Every adult dragonborn is expected to fight. Warfare is both a necessity of survival and a means of earning prestige.

The Sakaethyn rarely seek pitched battles unless they possess overwhelming advantage. Instead, they rely upon speed, deception, and exhaustion. Enemy armies are harassed for days with arrows before the dragonborn suddenly disappear across the horizon, only to return hours later from another direction.

Their mounted archers are among the finest in the world, capable of striking targets accurately while riding at full gallop. Even retreat is turned into a weapon, as fleeing riders loose deadly volleys behind them before wheeling around for another attack.

Only when an enemy has been weakened do the Sakaethyn close with swords, axes, and their fearsome draconic breath weapons. Taking the phallus of a slain enemy, as shown below, is a proud tradition among Sakaethyn warriors.

RELIGION

Nearly every tribe honors the Dragon Fathers and Dragon Mothers through ancestor worship, believing the spirits of great heroes continue to watch over their descendants. Shrines consist of carved standing stones, dragon skulls, or ancient burial mounds rather than elaborate temples. The Sakaethyn do worship a limited number of gods as well, but ancestor worship is far more common.

Shamans serve as healers, judges, historians, and intermediaries between the living and the spirits. Their visions are highly respected, and many tribes refuse to begin migrations or wage war without consulting them first.

The sacred city of Kaethyn remains the spiritual heart of all Sakaethyn, regardless of tribal rivalries.

THE CULT OF TIAMAT

Though worship of Tiamat, wife of Set, is forbidden in their culture, over the past few decades, a small but growing cult to the Dark Queen has risen quietly in their midsts. This group is in collusion with the vile sorcerer Wrath-Amon of Pharos, who needs to build a pyramid on Sakaethyn lands (see the Pharos section for more information). The followers of Tiamat view her as the true and rightful ruler of all dragons and dragonkind.

SLAVERY

The primary export of the Sakaethyn are slaves, and their primary buyer are the Thessadonians, who use the slaves mainly for households or their manufacturing industries. The Sakaethyn gain their slaves primarily through raids upon the Narsehans and the Massai. The Sakaethyn pride themselves on the number of slaves they've managed to capture, and, like the number of mounts one owns, it's a sign of prestige among the tribes.

CUSTOMS

Personal honor governs nearly every aspect of Sakaethyn life. Oaths sworn before witnesses are considered sacred, and breaking one's word carries lifelong shame.

Horse races, wrestling, mounted archery, falconry, and hunting contests are favorite pastimes. Children compete from an early age, and victories are remembered for decades.

The dead are buried beneath earthen mounds overlooking the open steppe, accompanied by prized weapons, treasured possessions, and often one or more horses believed necessary for the journey into the next life.

A Sakaethyn without a horse is pitied. A Sakaethyn who mistreats a horse is despised.

Relations with Other Nations

Most neighboring civilizations regard the Sakaethyn as dangerous barbarians, remembering centuries of devastating raids. The Sakaethyn, however, see themselves as a free people surrounded by decadent kingdoms softened by walls, cities, and luxury.

They respect strength wherever it is found. Brave enemies are admired, clever diplomats tolerated, and weak rulers viewed as invitations to raid.

Despite frequent warfare, trade flourishes along the borders. Horses, leather, wool, and slaves flow south, while finely worked steel, jewelry, wine, and exotic goods make their way back across the grasslands.

Pantheon

Arash: God of War

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Fiery Horse

Tabiti: Goddess of Health and Family

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: A Fully Pregnant Dragonborn Maiden

Api: God of the Winds

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Winged Fox

NPCS

CHIEFTAIN KHURZAK

8th-level dragonborn

Chieftain Khurzak of the Ashen Talon tribe is one of the most feared and respected war leaders among the Sakaethyn. A veteran of countless raids and border wars, Khurzak has earned his authority not through lineage alone, but through personal strength, ruthless strategy, and an unmatched command of mounted warfare. The Ashen Talon control vast stretches of steppe and command thousands of riders, making them one of the most powerful tribes outside Kaethyn. Khurzak is both warlord and judge, ruling by strength and the unyielding laws of the steppe.

AC 4, **HD** 8 (48hp), **Att** 1 × *short bow +3* (1d6+5), **THACo** 14 (9 with *short bow +3*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B8 S12, **STR** 16 **INT** 9 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 13 **CON** 11 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short bow, short sword, spear, **Specializations** Short bow, **Possessions** *short bow +3,* **Abilities** Gold — Fire Breath: cone 15' wide at the far end, 20' long , Draconic resistance: +2 saves vs damage type of own breath weapon, Dragon affinity: +1 to reaction rolls when encountering dragons, Dragon-affecting magic: affected by spells/items that specifically target dragons

RAGAR FLAME-BREATH

5th-level dragonborn fighter

Ragar Flame-Breath of the Red Dune tribe is celebrated across the Sakaethyn steppe as one of the greatest living warriors. Known for his fearless charges and unwavering presence in the thick of battle, Ragar has survived more raids, feuds, and tribal wars than most chieftains. He fights not for power or politics, but for glory and the honor of his ancestors. Wherever Ragar rides, the enemy line is said to tremble before his arrival.

AC 4, **HD** 5 (30hp), **Att** 1 × *scimitar +1* (1d6+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with *scimitar +1*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 16 **CON** 16 **CHA** 9, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, sword, spear, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *scimitar +1,* **Abilities** Red — Fire Breath: cone 15' wide at the far end, 20' long , Draconic resistance: +2 saves vs damage type of own breath weapon, Dragon affinity: +1 to reaction rolls when encountering dragons, Dragon-affecting magic: affected by spells/items that specifically target dragons, Multiple attacks vs <1HD foes (1 per level per round)

SARITHRAK

8th-level dragonborn barbarian

Sarithrak the Fivefold Coil is the secretive and feared leader of the Sakaethyn cult of Tiamat. Once a decorated tribal warrior, he turned from the old ancestor faith after visions of the Dark Queen's supremacy over all dragonkind. Charismatic, ruthless, and politically shrewd, Sarithrak unites scattered cells of worshippers across rival tribes, offering power, vengeance, and forbidden magic. Though his cult remains hidden, its influence is steadily growing within the steppe.

AC 4, **HD** 8 (26hp), **Att** 1 × battle axe (1d8+2), **THACo** 14 (12 with battle axe), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B8 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 14 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 12 **CON** 9 **CHA** 16, **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, short bow, sword, spear, **Specializations** Short sword, **Possessions** *scimitar +1,* **Abilities** Bronze — Lightning Breath: 5'×30', Draconic resistance: +2 saves vs damage type of own breath weapon, Dragon affinity: +1 to reaction rolls when encountering dragons, Dragon-affecting magic: affected by spells/items that specifically target dragons, Multiple attacks vs <1HD foes (1 per level per round)

UNITS

Below are the mass-combat stats for the average dragonborn warrior.

DRAGONBORN RAIDER
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

LAND OF THE DENAARI

Capital: NA
Demographics: 93% wild elf, 3% human, 2% half-elf, 2% other
Notable Settlements: NA
Population: 3.3 million people (600,000 families)
Government: Loose Confederation of Independent Tribes
Rulers: Each tribe ruled by a king advised by a council of elders
Annual Treasury: No centralized economy
Expenses: No centralized economy
Common Trade Goods: Grain, iron ore, slaves, wine
Demand Values: Grain +1, hides -1, iron +1, horses +1, slaves -1, wine +1

Beasts of Peril: Apes, badgers, baboons, bears, boars, centaurs, couatls, flying snakes, giant apes, giant badgers, giant boars, giant centipedes, giant spiders, needle blights, stirges, treants

The Denaari, known in most contemporary tongues as the Wild Elves, are the fragmented descendants of the High Elf kingdom of Vala Denai, but such a definition fails to capture what they have become. They are not a surviving remnant of a collapsed empire so much as a transformed cultural ecosystem—one shaped by centuries of frontier warfare, ecological adaptation, and political fragmentation. In many ways, they resemble the ancient peoples of the western steppes and forested highlands of the Middle Sea more than they resemble their High Elf forebears.

There are currently 43 different Denaari tribes, with shifting loyalties, coalitions, and wars. If they're not fighting the Thanes, they're raiding each other, selling captured prisoners of war as slaves to Karth.

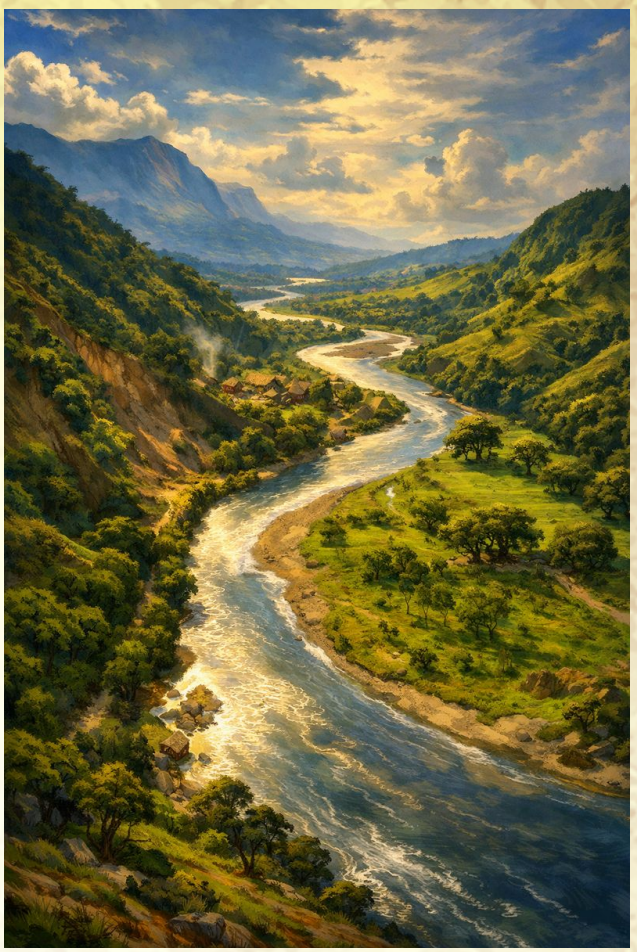
Denaari Tribes

Tribe	Population (warriors)
Bibractui	60,000 (12,000)
Vienaobroges	6,000 (1,200)
Shambarri	6,000 (1,200)
Amiani	6,000 (1,200)
Angecavi	6,000 (1,200)
Bor'aquitani	60,000 (12,000)
Gerverni	40,000 (8,000)
Arrabates	6,000 (1,200)
Baycasses	6,000 (1,200)
Elgae	40,000 (8,000)
Bioi	6,000 (1,200)
Cahadurci	6,000 (1,200)
Vatalauni	6,000 (1,200)
Lenomani	6,000 (1,200)
Meutrones	6,000 (1,200)
Corsolitae	6,000 (1,200)
Jablintes	6,000 (1,200)
Tubrones	6,000 (1,200)
Evrevices	6,000 (1,200)
Telvetti	60,000 (12,000)
Minsubres	6,000 (1,200)
Gemovices	6,000 (1,200)
Xexovii	6,000 (1,200)
Diomatrici	6,000 (1,200)

Denaari Tribes

Tribe	Population (warriors)
Vedulli	6,000 (1,200)
Cassapii	6,000 (1,200)
Pavanantes	6,000 (1,200)
Morobii	6,000 (1,200)
Corii	6,000 (1,200)
Raurigast	6,000 (1,200)
Kemi	20,000 (4,000)
Rasta	6,000 (1,200)
Kalassi	6,000 (1,200)
Yquani	40,000 (8,000)
Seneti	20,000 (4,000)
Losates	6,000 (1,200)
Nelli	6,000 (1,200)
Geren'ungri	6,000 (1,200)
Irvnei	60,000 (12,000)
Caevoil	40,000 (8,000)
Molissi	6,000 (1,200)
Pii'arsi	6,000 (1,200)
Laracomici	6,000 (1,200)

At their core, the Denaari are a people without a single state. They are divided into approximately forty-three major tribes, with countless smaller sub-tribes, client clans, and seasonal coalitions that form and dissolve according to war, trade, migration, and marriage alliances. There is no central authority that binds them, and no enduring political structure that can impose unity across their lands. Instead, unity exists as a memory, a language, and a set of shared ritual expectations inherited from the fallen kingdom of Vala Denai.



Their history after the fall of Vala Denai is defined by continuous conflict with the Land of the Thanes, a struggle that lasted so long it ceased to be remembered as a war and became instead a condition of existence. Over centuries of raiding, retaliation, and shifting frontiers, Denaari society hardened into its present form: mobile where necessary, fortified where possible, and always oriented around survival, honor, and tribal identity.

SETTLEMENTS, LANDSCAPE, AND DAILY LIFE

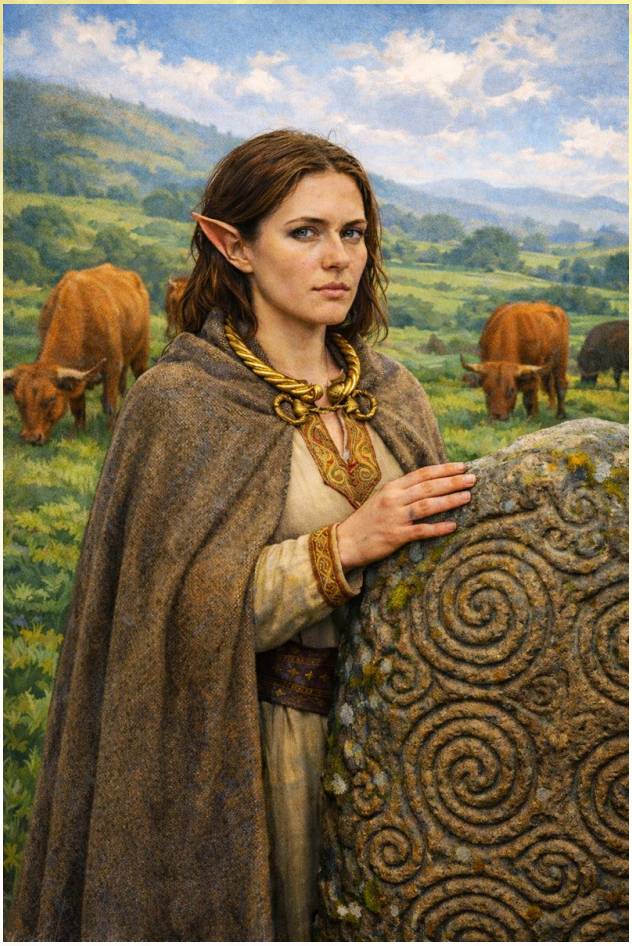
Denaari settlements, called *oppida*, are fortified tribal centers that anchor a surrounding rural population. They are typically located on elevated terrain—hilltops, river bends, forest clearings, or natural chokepoints—where geography provides as much defense as constructed walls. These settlements are enclosed by timber palisades, earthworks, and stone reinforcement, often rebuilt or expanded across generations rather than designed as single coherent structures.

Within these *oppida*, life is organized around extended kin groups rather than nuclear households. Long communal houses dominate the interior space, each shared by a lineage group that may include dozens of related individuals. Hearths are central not only physically but socially, serving as the primary space for eating, storytelling, dispute resolution, and the transmission of oral history.

The Denaari diet reflects both their environment and their departure from High Elf asceticism. Livestock such as goats, cattle, and swine form the foundation of domestic food production, supplemented by hunting, foraging, and seasonal agriculture. Meat consumption is normalized and culturally significant, often tied to ritual feasting or communal celebration. Grain breads, fermented dairy, preserved meats, and wild fruits are common staples, while alcohol—especially fermented grain beverages and imported Karthan wine—plays a central role in both social and ritual life.

TRIBAL STRUCTURE

Each Denaari tribe is governed by a chieftain or



king, typically drawn from a dominant lineage or war-leader aristocracy. These rulers are advised by councils of elders representing influential families, landholders, and veteran warriors. However, unlike imperial or feudal systems, authority is not absolute. The chieftain's power is contingent upon recognition, consensus, and the support of key social institutions—most importantly, the druids.

Druids function as the interpretive core of Denaari society. They are not simply priests but jurists, historians, mediators, and custodians of tradition. When a chieftain declares a law, it remains inert until interpreted through druidic authority. The druids determine not only guilt and innocence in legal disputes, but also whether a law aligns with the deeper balance of nature and ancestral precedent.

This creates a system in which political power is inherently negotiated. A king may command warriors, but he cannot enforce legitimacy without druidic sanction. Conversely, druids cannot wage war or enforce order without the cooperation of tribal leadership. The result is a dynamic tension between secular authority and spiritual-legal authority that varies significantly from tribe to tribe.

The Denaari do not worship gods in the structured theological sense common in neighboring civilizations. While they acknowledge divine beings, they do not place them at the center of religious practice. Instead, their spiritual system is rooted in druidic tradition that emphasizes the sacredness of the natural world and the continuity of life, death, and renewal.

Nature is more than symbolism to the Denaari. Forests, rivers, beasts, storms, and seasons are treated as expressions of a living system that includes both the material and the spiritual.

Within this framework, blood sacrifice is a mechanism of exchange. Life-force is believed to return to the world and strengthen it when properly offered. Sacrifices are most commonly performed after war, during major seasonal transitions, or in response to crises. Captured enemies—particularly from rival tribes or foreign powers such as Karth—are often used as offerings in these rites, which are intended to restore balance and secure future stability.

To outsiders, these practices are often interpreted as brutality or barbarism. Within Denaari culture, they are understood as continuity with the oldest principles of existence.

HALF-ELVES AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

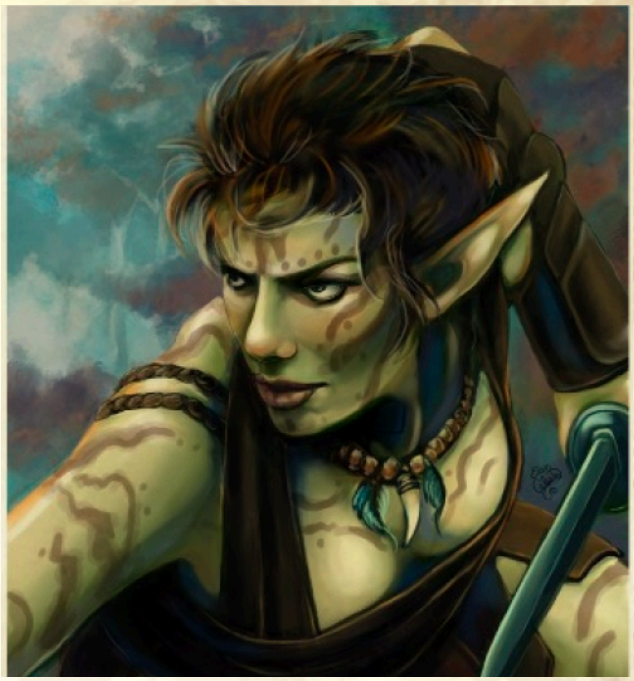
Half-elves occupy a structurally subordinate yet socially integrated position within Denaari society. They are fully protected under tribal law and may participate in most forms of labor, warfare, and communal life. However, they are excluded from positions of ultimate authority, including kingship, druidic orders, and councils of elders.

This exclusion is reinforced through visible cultural markers, most notably the requirement that half-elves maintain facial hair as a sign of their mixed heritage. This practice functions not merely as stigma but as a constant public acknowledgment of social classification.

As a result, half-elves frequently gravitate toward martial professions, where status is earned through individual accomplishment rather than inherited position. In many tribes, they form elite warrior groups or serve as scouts and raiders, roles that exploit their perceived outsider status within their own culture.

The Denaari are best understood not as a decline of High Elf civilization but as its transformation under extreme conditions. What remains of Vala Denai is not preserved intact, but reconstituted in fragmented, adaptive form. Their culture is shaped by memory of empire, constant exposure to war, and the necessity of survival in contested land.

To outsiders, they are wild elves—fractured, dangerous, and unpredictable. To themselves, they are a people who endure.



WARFARE AND THE ECONOMY OF VIOLENCE

War is a constant in Denaari life. Conflict occurs at three primary levels: raids between tribes, border warfare with the Thanes, and economic raiding into neighboring civilizations such as Karth. These conflicts are not always total wars; they exist along a spectrum of violence, from skirmishes and cattle raids to full-scale seasonal campaigns.

Denaari warfare emphasizes mobility, ambush, and psychological pressure. Mounted archery is the dominant tactic, supported by rapid withdrawal and re-engagement designed to exhaust and disorient enemy forces. Direct confrontation is avoided unless advantage is overwhelming.

Success in warfare is not only measured in victory but in tangible gain: livestock, captives, prestige, and territory. Raiding functions as both economic activity and social

performance, reinforcing status within and between tribes.

RELATIONS WITH KARTH

The Karthan Republic occupies a uniquely ambivalent position in Denaari political consciousness. It is simultaneously a trading partner, a source of wealth, and a potential existential threat.

Trade with Karth has become deeply embedded in frontier life. Karthan merchants are common in border *oppida*, and many tribes rely on imported goods such as metalwork, wine, coinage, and luxury items. In exchange, the Denaari supply horses, hides, captives, and goods obtained through raiding or pastoral production.

However, this relationship is uneven and politically divisive. Some tribes have entered formal recognition agreements with Karth, while others reject all contact and engage in active hostilities. Among the most militant factions, Karth is viewed not as a trading partner but as a future imperial force that will eventually attempt to absorb or destroy Denaari independence.

HOSPITALITY

Despite their reputation for violence, the Denaari maintain strict and widely observed customs of hospitality. A guest who enters a settlement peacefully is entitled to food, shelter, and protection for a limited period. In return, guests are expected to behave respectfully, share news or stories from distant lands, and participate in communal life without disrupting tribal order.

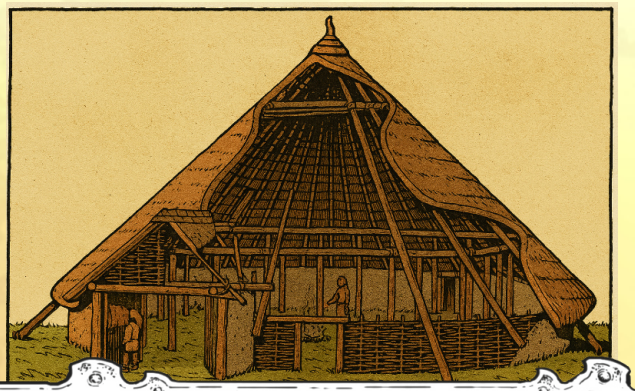
Oppida are often misunderstood by outsiders as disorganized or primitive, but in practice they are highly structured defensive communities. Daily life is regulated by kinship obligation, seasonal cycles, and druidic oversight rather than formal bureaucracy. Order is maintained not through abstraction but through visibility and immediacy.

Justice is similarly immediate. Punishments are enacted publicly and swiftly, ensuring that law remains embedded in collective memory rather than distant authority.

Denaari law is customary and transmitted through oral tradition, druidic interpretation, and precedent. Justice is fundamentally restorative in theory, though often severe in practice. The primary goal is not punishment for its own sake, but the restoration of balance within the tribe and its relationship to the natural world.

Theft is addressed through restitution, often exceeding the value of the stolen goods, reinforcing social accountability. Violence within the tribe is treated with particular seriousness, as internal conflict is viewed as a weakening of the collective. Murder, depending on circumstance, may result in compensation, exile, or ritual execution.

Exile is one of the most feared outcomes in Denaari society. To be cast out is not merely to lose protection, but to lose identity entirely. Without tribe, lineage, and druidic recognition, an individual becomes socially and spiritually unmoored.



PANTHEON

The Denaari don't recognize a pantheon of gods. Though they respect the gods, they instead worship nature. Druids are common in their culture, but clerics are rare.

NPCS

CAELEN: CHIEFTAIN OF THE TELVETTI

3rd-level half-elf fighter / 3rd-level half-elf

Chieftain Caelen of the Telvetti rules one of the largest and most powerful Denaari tribes. A brilliant war leader and fierce nationalist, he believes the endless rivalries between the tribes have only strengthened Karth. Caelen dreams of uniting all the Denaari beneath a single ruler before leading a great invasion to the south, crushing the Karthan Republic and reclaiming the lands he believes rightfully belong to his people. Due to his half-elf heritage, he has not had much success.

AC 3, **HD** 6 (19hp), **Att** 1 × broadsword (1d8+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with broadsword), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P11 B13 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 13 **CON** 9 **CHA** 11, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Sling, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Spells** *magic missile, charm person, wizard lock*

THALANOR THE SEER

6th-level elf magic-user

Thalanor the Seer is a wandering Denaari mage and prophet who claims to have witnessed a terrible vision of the future. In his dreams, the Karthan Republic conquers the Denaari, their sacred groves are burned, their oppida razed, and millions perish beneath the empire's legions. Most dismiss him as a mad mystic, but Chieftain Caelen of the Telvetti has taken his warnings to heart, believing the prophecy can still be prevented through unity and war.

AC 9, **HD** 6 (15hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 9 **INT** 18 **WIS** 7 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 11, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Staff, **Spells** *magic missile, shield, mirror image, continual light, dispel magic,* **Possessions** *ring of spell storing* (currently has *magic missile, light, shield,* and *dispel maigc)*

FAELAR OF THE CAEVOIL: ARCHDRUID

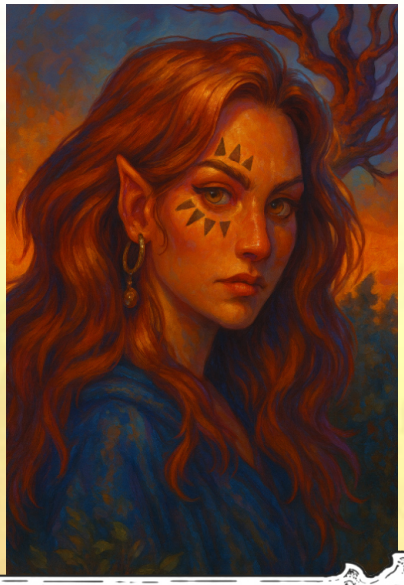
8th-level elf druid

Archdruid Faelar of the Caevoil is one of the most revered druids among the Denaari, renowned for his wisdom, mastery of the old rites, and unwavering devotion to the balance of nature. Kings seek his counsel, rival druids respect his judgments, and even hostile tribes hesitate to ignore his words. Though he avoids political ambition, Faelar's influence reaches far beyond his own people, and his voice has prevented more than one tribal war from consuming the forests.

AC 7, **HD** 8 (32hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4+1), **THAC0** 17 (16 with staff), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 15 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 17 **CON** 14 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, sling, spear, **Possessions** *staff of commanding animals,* **Abilities** Charm Immunity: from level 7, immune to charms of fairies and Sylvan creatures (dryads, nixies), Energy Resistance: +2 saves vs electricity (lightning) and fire, Identification: identify all plants and animals, discern pure water, Pass Without Trace: from level 3, pass through natural environments leaving no tracks; move through overgrown areas at normal speed, Path-Finding: party has only 1-in-6 chance of getting lost in woodlands, Shape Change: from level 7, change into reptile/bird/mammal once per day each; up to ~2x normal bulk; regain 1d4 HP per level on change; equipment absorbed and reappears, **Spells** *detect snares & pits, detect magic, purify water, cure light wounds, barkskin, charm person or mammal, protection from fire, hold animal, summon insects, cure serious wounds, command plants, animal summoning II, moonbeam*

THE BRIAR SISTERS

The Briar Sisters—Aelis, Maev, and Rhiannon became outlaws after their parents were slain by Karthan soldiers. Gathering exiles, fugitives, and disgraced warriors from many Denaari tribes, they forged one of the most notorious bandit companies in the LongWall Mountains. Their relentless raids against Karthan caravans have earned them folk-hero status among some Denaari, but their attacks disrupt profitable trade, making them enemies of neighboring tribes as well as the mountain dwarves of Throle, whose patrols hunt them without mercy. For stats use elves.



UNITS

Below are the stats for a common unit of Denaari wild elves.

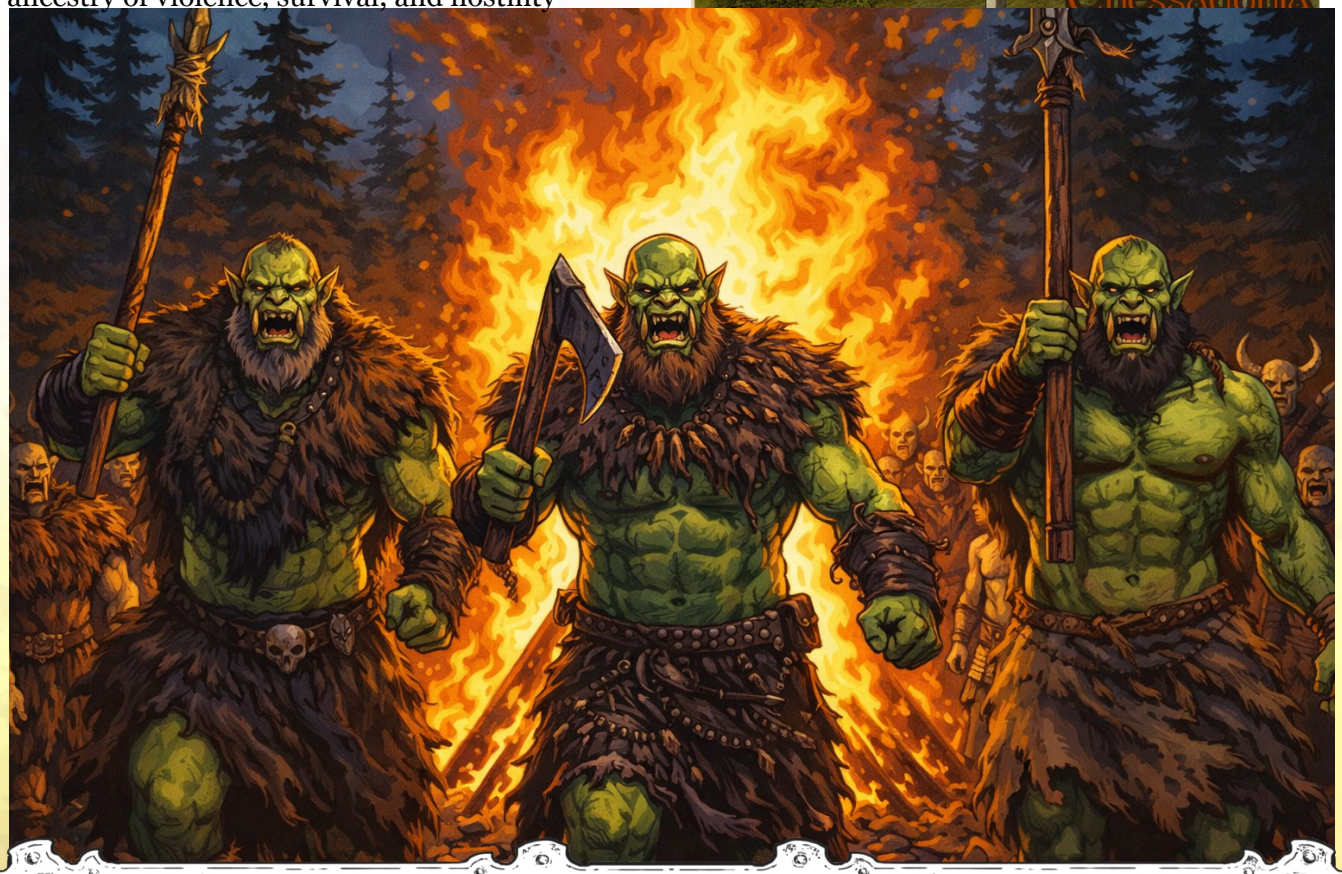
DENAARI TRIBESMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

Land of the Thanes

Capital: NA
Demographics: 99% Thane, 1% other
Notable Settlements: NA
Population: 5.5 million people (1.1 million families)
Government: None
Rulers: None
Annual Treasury: No centralized economy
Expenses: No centralized economy
Common Trade Goods: None
Demand Values: NA

Beasts of Peril: Aurochs, demons, giant apes, dinosaurs, jackalweres, Thanes, wereboars, werewolves, worgs, wyverns

The word Thane is a broad term used by the civilized peoples of the **Middle Sea** to describe the many corrupted races that inhabit the lands north of the great forests and beyond the borders of settled kingdoms. It includes orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, gnolls, trolls, ogres, ettins, and countless other creatures twisted by the influence of Erropersonis and its dark allies. Though these peoples differ greatly in appearance and custom, they share a common ancestry of violence, survival, and hostility toward the ordered civilizations of the world. Of all the peoples known collectively as the Thanes, the orcs are by far the most numerous and culturally dominant. The countless orc tribes that inhabit the region number in the millions, with warrior hosts said to exceed one million strong. Their lands stretch across vast forests, rugged hills, and harsh wilderness where few civilized nations have ever attempted



permanent settlement.

Yet despite their numbers, the Thanes have never formed a lasting empire. Their greatest strength is also their greatest weakness. The same pride, independence, and warrior spirit that makes them formidable enemies prevents them from accepting a single ruler for long. Tribes rise and fall, chiefs challenge chiefs, and alliances are formed only to collapse when ambition or insult drives warriors apart.

The civilized kingdoms of the **Middle Sea** have long considered this division their greatest protection. They know that if the Thanes were ever united under one leader, the armies that emerged from the north would rival any force in the world.

THE ORC TRIBES

Orc society is built around the tribe. A tribe is not merely a political organization but the foundation of identity itself. An orc does not define himself by profession, wealth, or place of birth. He is of the Black Fang, the Iron Wolves, the Blood Spears, or whatever tribe claims his ancestors.

Each tribe is composed of extended families, warrior households, hunters, craftsmen, and spiritual leaders. At the center stands the chieftain, a figure whose authority comes not from inheritance alone, but from strength and personal reputation.

Among the orcs, leadership is not granted. It is taken. The oldest law of orc society is simple: might makes right. A weak leader endangers the tribe, and therefore a weak leader has no right to command. Any warrior strong enough to challenge the chieftain may do so, and the matter is settled through combat. Some challenges are fought until first blood, but most end only when one warrior stands and the other no longer can.

This constant competition creates a brutal but effective system. Orc chieftains are rarely weak, because weakness is immediately tested. A ruler who grows lazy, fearful, or incapable of protecting the tribe will not survive long.

THANIC TRIBES

Though orcs are most numerous, there are many different kinds of tribes that make up the Thanes. The following pages highlight several of the largest tribes, and their common look.

The majority of this chapter, however, will focus on the culture and ways of the orc tribes, as they are most dominant.

The Mudtooth Clan (goblin tribe)

The White Fang Clan (orc tribe)

The Red Hunger Clan (gnoll tribe)

The Bloodmaw Clan (orc tribe)

The Crooked Blade Clan (goblin tribe)

The Black Antler Clan (orc tribe)

The Feral Scream Clan (goblin tribe)

The Skull Keeper Clan (ogre tribe)

The Broken Crown Horde (coalition of several orc and hobgoblin tribes)

The Black Burrow Tribe (kobold tribe)

The Black Legion of Varkuun (hobgoblin tribe)

HONOR AND THE WARRIOR IDEAL

To the orcs, life exists as preparation for conflict. Their culture places extraordinary importance on endurance, courage, and personal achievement. A warrior's reputation is his greatest possession, and the stories told about him after death are considered the true measure of his life.

Children are trained from a young age in hunting, combat, tracking, and survival. Childhood games often imitate raids and battles, teaching cooperation, aggression, and cunning. Young warriors are expected to prove themselves through acts of courage, whether hunting dangerous beasts, raiding enemies, or challenging rivals. A warrior who has never faced danger is considered incomplete.

The orcs have little admiration for comfort or luxury. Jewelry, decorations, elaborate clothing, and expensive possessions are viewed with suspicion unless they serve a purpose. To possess something merely because it is beautiful is seen as a weakness of civilized peoples—a distraction that softens the spirit.

The greatest treasures of an orc are weapons, mounts, scars, and stories.

THE MOVING TRIBES

Unlike many civilizations, the orcs have little interest in permanently claiming land. They do not build kingdoms of stone or cultivate great fields. Instead, tribes migrate regularly, moving their settlements with the seasons.

This tradition serves several purposes. It prevents the tribe from becoming dependent upon farming or fixed resources, activities many orcs believe weaken the warrior spirit. It also prevents attachment to territory. In orc philosophy, ownership of land is a civilized illusion. The world belongs to those strong enough to survive upon it.

Each year, a tribe selects a new place to establish its camp. Great communal halls and shelters are constructed from wood, hide, and bone, then abandoned when the tribe moves onward.

To outsiders, this appears wasteful. To the orcs, it represents freedom.

A people who can leave everything behind and survive anywhere cannot be conquered.

LIFE AMONG THE ORCS

Orc life is intentionally harsh. Comfort is viewed as dangerous because it encourages weakness and complacency. Orcs believe the body and mind must constantly be tested.

Bathing is performed in cold rivers and streams rather than heated pools. Exposure to the elements is considered a form of training, and many warriors intentionally endure cold, hunger, and exhaustion to strengthen themselves.

Clothing is practical and often minimal compared to the standards of civilized nations. Armor is worn when necessary, but daily life emphasizes toughness and adaptation rather than protection from every hardship. The orc ideal is to overcome suffering, not avoid it.

FOOD AND FEASTING

Orc cuisine reflects their lifestyle. Their diet is built primarily around meat, supplemented by milk, cheese, and other animal products. Hunting is both necessity and cultural expression. A warrior's ability to bring down dangerous prey is a measure of skill and courage.

Great hunts are often accompanied by celebrations lasting several days, where warriors recount their achievements and compete in contests of strength, endurance, and combat.

Unlike many civilized peoples, the orcs have little interest in wine. They consider fermented grape drinks weak and overly refined. Instead, they favor strong ales and harsh spirits, which are consumed during gatherings, victories, and tribal ceremonies.

Feasting is not merely about food. It is where alliances are created, rivalries are tested, and reputations are made.

HORSES AND WORG RIDERS

The orcs are among the greatest riders in the Middle Sea, surpassing even the famed horsemen of the Denaari. Their mastery comes from a lifetime spent among their mounts.

Orcs ride both horses and worgs, forming terrifying cavalry forces capable of crossing enormous distances with speed and ferocity. Unlike civilized cavalry, however, orc riders reject saddles.

A saddle is considered a sign of weakness, suggesting that a warrior requires assistance to remain mounted. A true rider controls the beast through balance, strength, and understanding.

An orc caught using a saddle risks losing all respect among his tribe. Worse, any warrior may challenge him for possession of his mount, claiming that a coward has no right to own such a creature.

RAIDING AND THE NUDABAI RIVER

The great Nudabi River forms the eastern border between the Land of the Thanes and the territories of the Denaari. It is a place of constant tension, where warriors from both cultures test each other through raids, ambushes, and acts of vengeance.

Unlike organized military campaigns, most orc raids begin with a single warrior seeking glory. He announces his intention to cross the river, gather companions, and return with wealth, captives, and stories.

Those who believe in his courage join him. A successful raid can transform an unknown warrior into a legendary figure. The greatest chiefs often begin as raiders whose victories attract followers until they possess enough reputation to claim leadership.

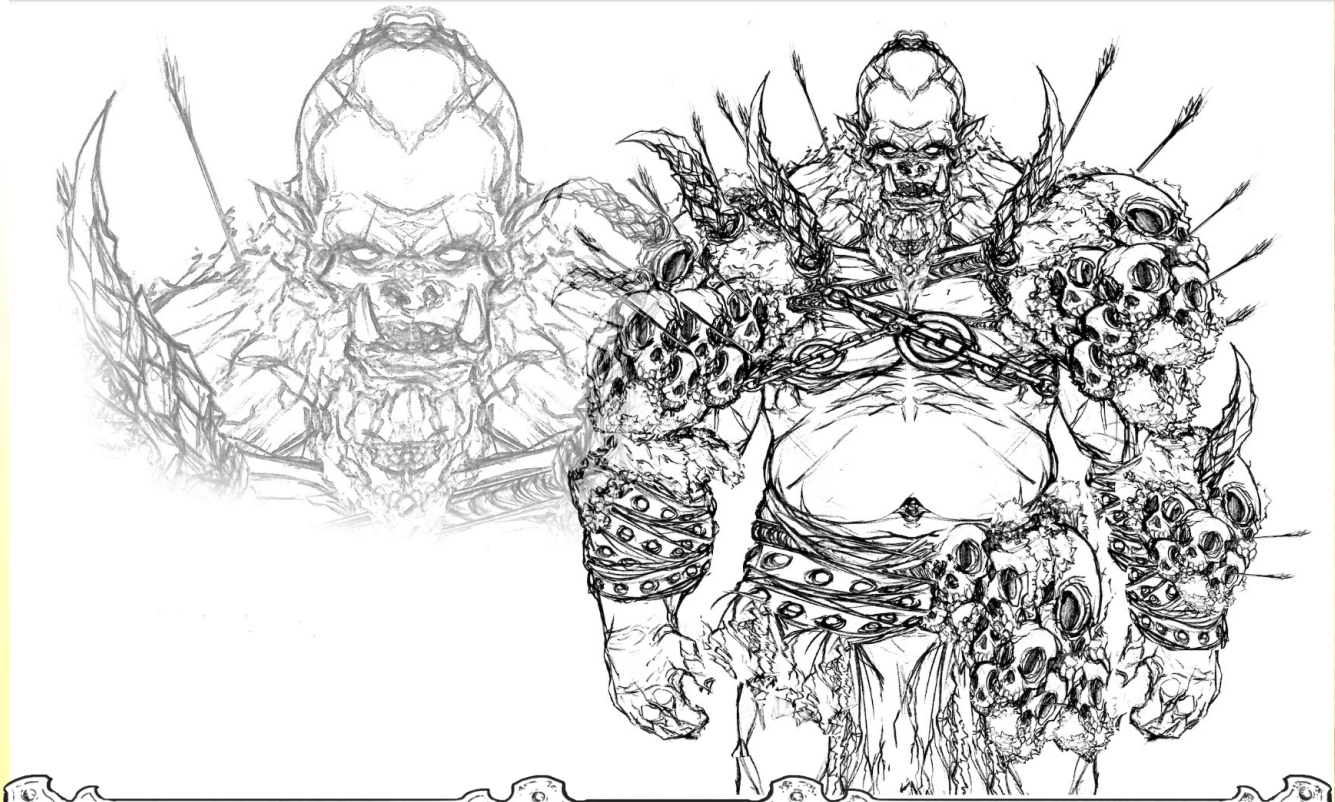
Failure, however, brings shame. A warrior who returns empty-handed must endure ridicule until he restores his honor through another deed.

THE LAW OF GUESTS

Although the Thanes are feared throughout the civilized world, they possess strict traditions of hospitality. Among the orcs, the ancient Law of Gruumsh states that any person welcomed as a guest beneath the protection of the tribe is considered part of that tribe until they depart.

A guest may eat from the tribe's stores, sleep beside its fires, and expect protection from harm.

To attack a guest is among the greatest crimes an orc can commit. Such a violation is considered a betrayal not only of the tribe but of the ancient laws that hold society together. Any warrior who breaks this law faces execution.



This custom often surprises outsiders, who expect only brutality from the Thanes. Yet hospitality and violence are not contradictions within orc culture. Both are expressions of the same principle: honor.

A guest is protected because the tribe has given its word. An enemy is destroyed because the tribe has given its word to destroy them.

THE THANES AND THE CIVILIZED WORLD

The peoples of the **Middle Sea** often view the Thanes as mindless monsters, but this understanding is incomplete. The Thanes possess their own traditions, laws, and values, even if those values are fundamentally different from those of civilized kingdoms.

They do not seek wealth through trade, stability through agriculture, or power through bureaucracy. They seek strength, reputation, survival, and the freedom to live according to their ancient ways.

To the kingdoms of the south, they are a constant threat waiting beyond the borders.

To themselves, they are the last people in the world who have refused to become weak.

PANTHEON

The orcs worship only Gruumsh, the One-Eyed, the god of the orcs, and the one whom they believe is the only true god. Gruumsh rules over the domain of War and is of Chaotic alignment.

NPCS

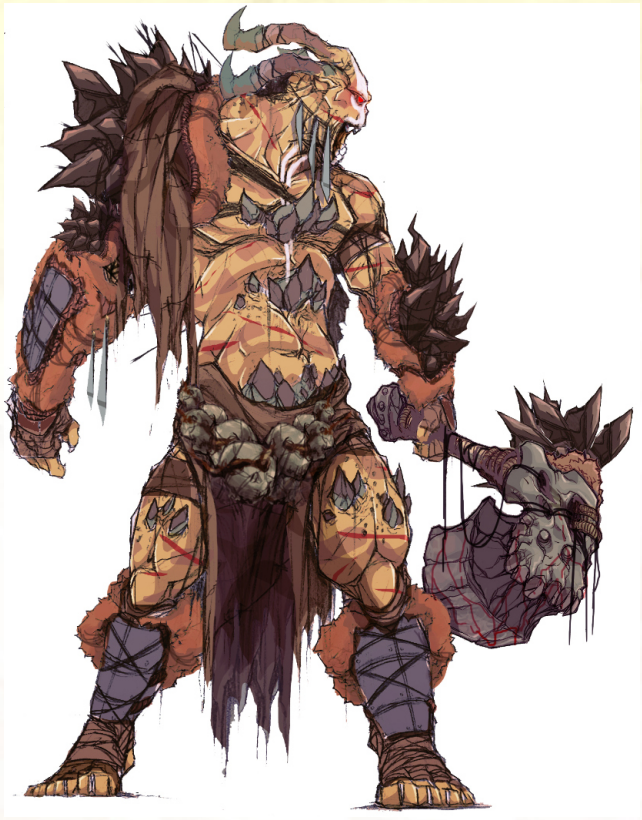
DROGATH BLOODSEER

Shaman Drogath Bloodseer is the spiritual leader of the Bloodmaw Clan, revered as the voice of Gruumsh and keeper of the tribe's oldest traditions. Blind since birth, he claims to see through the eyes of his ancestors, interpreting omens from fire, blood, and bone. Chieftains seek his counsel before war, for his prophecies have guided the Bloodmaw to victory more often than even its fiercest warriors care to admit.

For stats, use orc leader with the following spells: *cure light wounds, purify food and water*.

ICHIEFTAIN GORRUK SKULL-KEEPER

Chieftain Gorruk Skull-Keeper rules the Skull Keeper Clan, the largest and most feared ogre tribe in the Land of the Thanes. Cunning by ogre standards and immensely strong, Gorruk has united dozens of lesser clans through conquest and intimidation. He is infamous for preserving the skulls of worthy foes, believing each one carries the strength and spirit of its former owner. His great hall is lined with hundreds of these grisly trophies, a testament to a lifetime of relentless warfare. For stats use ogre.



CHIEFTAIN HROGAR

Chieftain Hrogar has led the White Fang Clan for nearly two decades, an extraordinary feat among the ever-contentious orc tribes. A towering warrior hardened by the frozen northern wilds, he has survived countless challenges to his rule through equal measures of strength, discipline, and tactical brilliance. Hrogar believes an orc earns loyalty not through fear alone, but by proving himself the greatest hunter, warrior, and protector of his people.

For stats use orc chieftain.

CHIEFTAIN VORGASH THREE-HORNS

Chieftain Vorgash Three-Horns rules the War Tusks, a legendary orc clan whose warriors tame the fierce triceratops that roam the deepest forests of the Land of the Thanes. Feared for their thunderous charges, the War Tusks have shattered countless shield walls beneath the beasts' massive horns. Vorgash is regarded as the greatest beastmaster of his generation, said to have broken his first triceratops with nothing but a spear, a rope, and his indomitable will.

For stats use orc chieftain.

SHAMAN SHRIK THE MAD-EYE

Shaman Skrik the Mad-Eye is the feared spiritual leader of the Feral Scream Clan, a goblin tribe infamous for its savage ambushes and eerie war cries that echo through the forests at night. Missing sight in one eye since childhood, Skrik claims the spirits took the vision from that eye (which is now just a milky white) in exchange for visions of the future. He guides the clan through omens read in smoke, bones, and the cries of carrion birds, urging constant raids to appease the restless spirits of fallen goblin warriors.

For stats use goblin bodyguard and give the following spells: *remove fear, resist cold.*

KHARZUG THE HELL-BLOODED

5th-level tiefling

Kharzug the Hell-Blooded is the greatest champion of the Broken Crown Horde, a feared warrior whose demonic blood marks him as both an outcast and a living weapon. Born from a forbidden union with a fiend, Kharzug rose above prejudice through unmatched skill, defeating countless rivals in single combat. Now the favored champion of the Horde's warlords, he inspires both fear and loyalty, embodying the brutal strength and ambition that could one day unite the Thanes.

Stats on the following page.

AC 7, **HD** 5 (22hp), **Att** 1 × battle axe (1d8+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with battle axe), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D11 W12 P12 B15 S14, **STR** 15 **INT** 13 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 15 **CON** 13 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, spear, sword, **Abilities** Beguile % (persons up to tiefling's level in HD save vs spells or believe; lasts 1 round/level; realize afterwards; once per day per person) 50% , Hear noise (rolled on 1d6; success if within range) 1-3 (1d6), Hide in shadows % (must be motionless) 30% , Move silently 40%, Infravision 60'

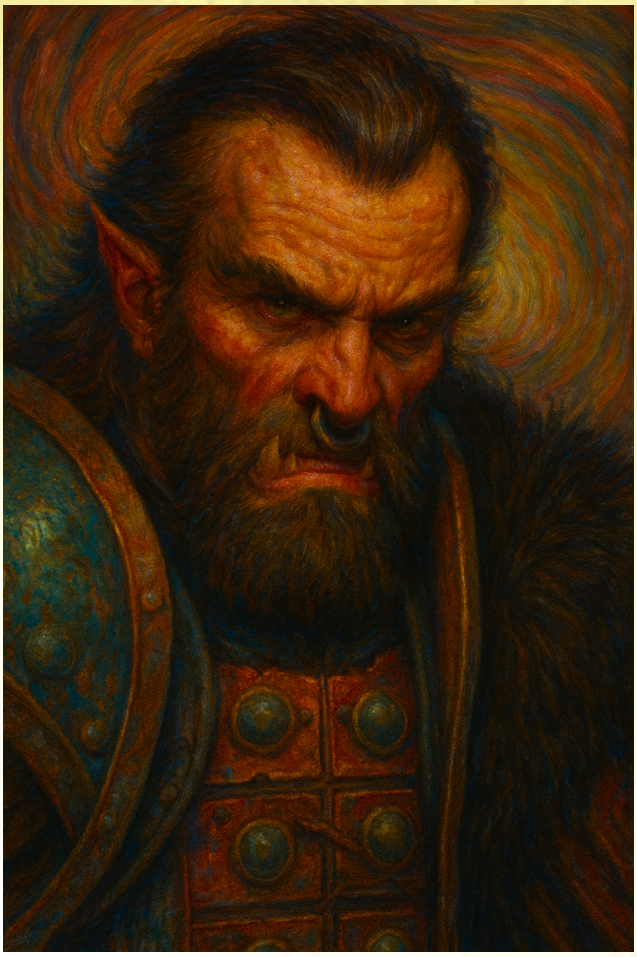
CHIEFTAIN VARKA ONE-EYE

Chieftain Varka One-Eye of the Black Antlers has ruled her tribe through strength, cunning, and the favor of the spirits. As a child, an eagle tore out her eye, an event the clan shaman declared a sacred omen, believing Gruumsh had marked her through the wound. Rather than be diminished, Varka embraced the sign and grew into a fearsome warrior. After defeating the former chieftain in single combat, she has led the Black Antlers into an age of prosperity and conquest.

For stats, use orc chieftain.

MORGATH IRON-TONGUE

Morgath Iron-Tongue is one of the few orc merchants who regularly crosses the borders between the Land of the Thanes and the civilized realms beyond. A skilled trader, he supplies Thane tribes with refined steel, tools, weapons, and other goods that are difficult to produce in their wandering lifestyle. Yet his success has brought him a taste for luxuries—fine clothing, Karthan wines, etc—that many orcs view as signs of weakness. Some admire his cunning; others whisper that civilization is softening him.



Warchief Kazath: The Iron Strategist

Warchief Kazath the Iron Strategist commands the Black Legion of Varkuun, the most disciplined and organized hobgoblin host in the Land of the Thanes. Unlike many Thane leaders who rely on individual strength and personal glory, Kazath believes victory comes through preparation, hierarchy, and absolute obedience. His warriors march in perfect formation, wielding standardized weapons and armor crafted for war. Though many orcs view his methods as unnatural, even they respect the terrifying effectiveness of his armies.

For stats use hobgoblin king.

Gorvak Bloodhorn of the Black Antlers

Gorvak Bloodhorn of the Black Antlers is among the greatest warriors of his tribe, a champion whose strength and battlefield prowess rival even that of Chieftain Varka One-Eye. Once considered a possible mate for the chieftain, Gorvak was enraged when she rejected his proposal, believing a warrior of his standing deserved both her hand and the throne beside her. Proud and ambitious, he now gathers followers among the clan, and many believe it is only a matter of time before he challenges Varka for leadership.

For stats use orc chieftain.

UNITS

Below are the mass-combat stats for a typical orc Thanic warrior.

THANIC WARRIOR
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (broadsword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsman
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

NORDVANIR

Capital: NA
Demographics: 63% human, 30% hill dwarf, 5% dragonborn, 2% other
Notable Settlements: Vidsith (6,000 families; Market Value IV), Voth (10,000 families; Market Value IV), Swane (12,000 families; Market Value IV), Vangal (15,000 families; Market Value III), Naxon (8,000 families; Market Value IV), Orse (5,000 families; Market Value IV), Edador (5,000 families; Market Value IV)
Population: 2.25 million people (450,000 families)
Government: None
Rulers: Many kings and chieftains
Annual Treasury: No centralized economy
Expenses: No centralized economy
Common Trade Goods: Furs, whalebones, walrus tusks, axe heads. hides, bird feathers, whale-skin rope, slaves
Demand Values: Furs and hides -2, grain +1, iron +2, slaves -2, walrus tusks +2
Beasts of Peril: Dire wolves, duergar, giants, ghosts, kraken, linnorms, white dragons

The warrior Nordvanir burst out of the frigid waters into the **Middle Sea** millennia ago, and they have since established themselves as one of the most feared enemies of the civilized lands. Every year, they raid hundreds of cities, towns, and settlements throughout the lands, taking what they can carry and burning what remains. None are spared their wrath—not man, woman, child, or beast, and everywhere coastal watchtowers gaze out across the ocean with a fearful dread, praying they never see the colored sails of these powerful and brutal warriors sweeping down upon their beaches.

But these proud warriors are more than simple barbarians. Gold, silver, and other items acquired through raids are useless to them. To get what they need, the Nordvanir have become expert tradesmen.

Trading posts and towns have sprung up across their lands, where their ill-gotten gains are bartered for more practical items needed for survival in the harsh wintery realm they call home.

The instrument that makes the Nordvanir so feared is their innovative naval accomplishment—the longboat. Wide and shallow with a draft of but a few inches, these sleek vessels are perfect for both the open waters of the terrifying unknown oceans as well as shallow rivers. They are even light enough to be ported across short distances of land to other water sources, thus allowing them to raid unexpectedly deep inland and vanish again before the local ruler can muster his soldiers for

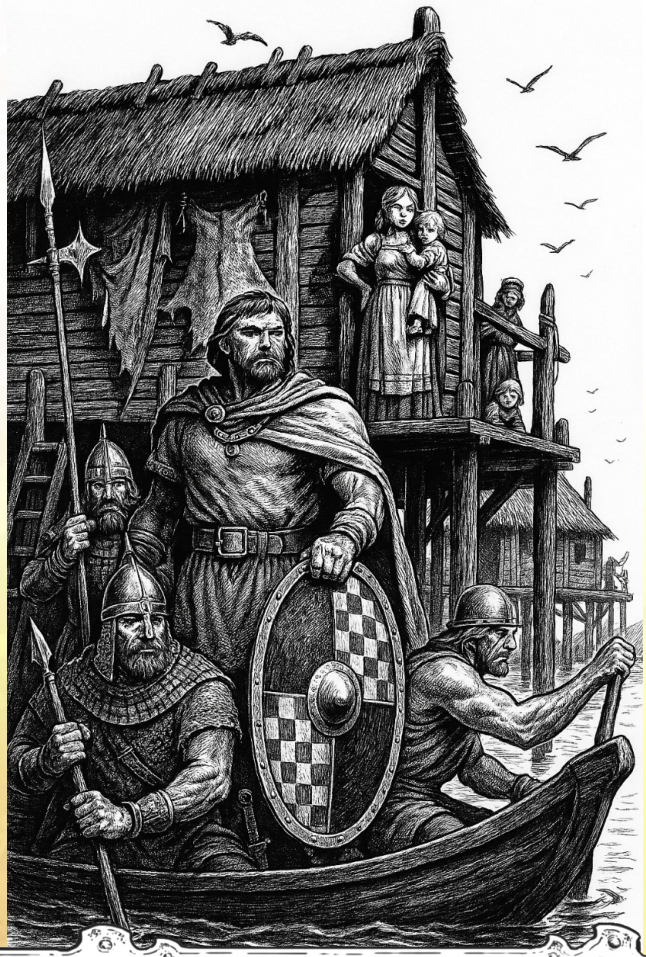
a counter attack. They can be rowed or sailed, carried around rocks and rapids, and are sturdy enough to ferry both men and horses, making this versatile vehicle their most prized possession. Each longboat is decorated with a detachable Figurehead—usually of a dragon or other feared beast, and often the symbol of some warrior or king of renown. The Nordvanir have a long history of raiding to take what they need. In their homeland, society has traditionally been organized around clans and villages. Arable land is a high commodity in that frozen expanse, and over the centuries as their numbers grew, so too did their localized conflicts over resources. Local chieftains took to gathering their men and raiding neighboring settlements to take what they needed and, quite savagely, to thin the population. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, their numbers eventually grew so large that they have ceased raiding each other and have instead fixed their gazes upon the fat, ripe target of the **Middle Sea**, and going raiding is seen as an opportunity for quick wealth and rewards.

The Nordvanir have a habit of raiding not only for treasures, but also for slaves. Most of the cultures have a strong lust for slaves, and the Nordvanir are more than happy to give them what they desire. They sell slaves they capture in battle or ones they gather in organized slave hunts. Occasionally they keep the slaves for themselves. The slaves of the Nordvanir are called *thralls*, and if they perform good service for their masters, they are eventually freed and given full rights in the Nordvanir societies.

DAILY LIFE

Life in the lands of the Nordvanir is harsh, bleak, and terrifically cruel, with very few months of favorable weather every year. The strong survive and the weak perish, and the only law is that which can be enforced by the sword or axe. It is a land, however, that has produced a rather remarkable race of traders, explorers, and adventurers, who, when not out on a raid or busy fending off frost giants, linnorms, duergar, or kraken back home, are bringing about a trade network the likes of which have not been seen. The Nordvanir exist in a cold and brutal climate, and life is all about survival. Their society is agriculturally oriented, with villages and towns typically built around fertile stretches of land. The family farm is the basic economic unit, and the villagers rely on livestock and grain. Their coastlines are dotted with countless fjords, which are the preferred location for these settlements, as they not only offer a natural protection from the sea (and whatever might rise out of it), but there is often good, arable land and plenty of fishing as well. These communities also serve as the launch pads out into the wider world for their large fleets of longboats, ready for rapine and plunder.

Social hierarchies define Nordvanir life. At the top of society sits the nobility—the kings, chieftains, jarls, and other titular forms of royalty. A chieftain is the head of a village or town, while a king is merely a chieftain with enough followers to dare call himself one. Jarls are members of a royal family. Most wait patiently in line for their chance at the throne, while some strike off into the world to make



themselves known as successful war captains and raiders.

Below the nobility rests the bulk of Nordvanir society—the *karls*. *Karls* are freemen, including the farmers, traders, warriors, craftsmen, and big landowners. Some *karls*, if particularly skilled warriors, become retainers for a noble house. These *huskarls* (literally "karls of the house") serve as personal bodyguards to the family.

Nordvanir farmers cultivate their fields by rivers, where they let their livestock graze. Common animals include horses, cattle, goats, and sheep. While towns and villages typically have a dedicated smith, most farm implements are made from wood, and Nordvanir farmers go into the forest to gather suitable wood for ploughs, pitchforks, handles for sickles, and for whatever else they need. Iron heads and blades are typically hammered out by the local smith for a small fee. However, most Nordvanir farmers also tend to be skilled smiths themselves who spend the winters traveling and peddling their wares.

Most of the hard labor in Nordvanir is delegated to the final and lowest level of society—the *thralls,* or slaves. While most slaves are foreigners captured in raids or hunts, some are freemen working to pay off debts. Most well-to-do families have at least one thrall, if even but for a short time.

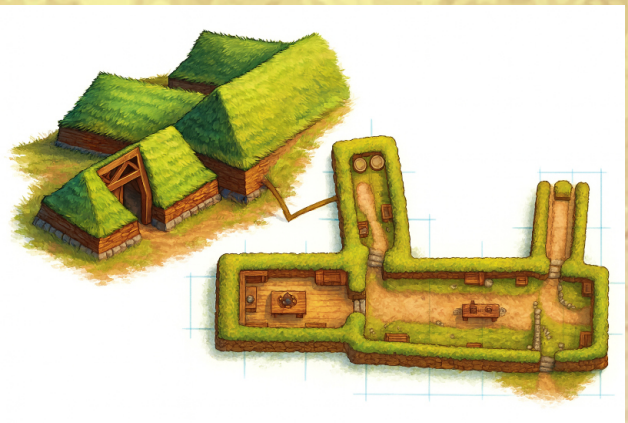
Upon death, a Nordvanirman is buried with his personal belongings. They believe that what they are buried with carries over with them to their next life. Wealthy nobility are often even buried with longships and even their favorite slaves and mistresses.

Though the society is warrior-based, it is far from misogynistic. Because Nordvanir warriors are away from the home for long stretches at a time, women have become the masters of the domicile. Women have the right to sue for divorce if their husbands treat them poorly and to even own land. Some women have even become feared and respected warriors in their own right. These Warrior Maidens are highly prized as wives—if a man is strong enough to claim one.

Nordvanir homes are rectangular. The frame comprises vertical posts through which rods and brushwood are woven before being covered in a thick coat of harddrying mud. The roof is then covered in densely woven straw, while floors are packed earth. The hearth is but a simple pit dug in the floor, sometimes stone-lined and always at the very center of the home. A simple chain hangs above it, attached to a horizontal post, from which pots hang to boil water or make soup. The only furniture in the homes are counters and benches permanently fixed to the walls. The benches are for both sitting and sleeping and run the length of the walls, with pegs above for clothes.

Small shelves hold tools, dishes and cutlery, personal belongings, and for those that can afford them, candles. However, for light most make due with simple iron lamps fueled with tallow or fish oil. A communal bowl of water is kept nearby to use for washing, to rinse their hair, blow their noses, and spit in.

Humans and animals live under one



roof, and it is common to find goats, chickens, and dogs sleeping on the floors. This is not only to keep an eye on their property and ensure no one steals their livestock, but also for the added warmth during the harsh winter months.

Hunting is another important aspect of Nordvanir society. Stag, elk, deer, and caribou antlers are used to carve combs, and deer skin is used for not only clothes, but also wall and bed coverings. Venison is a staple meat source, which can be either dried or roasted. A good hunter is highly prized in any Nordvanir family.

Since Nordvanir society has evolved into a trading culture, the need for locks on homes have become commonplace as strangers from far and wide make many Nordvanir towns their port of call. Typical locks are sophisticated devices based on modified Karthan designs and have been known to thwart even the most experienced thief.

The hearth is the center of the Nordvanir home. It is the centerpiece for all meals, and is the time for the family and retainers to talk over chunks of bread and meat. Every man, woman, and child has his or her own knife for eating, plus spoons of horn or wood (though most meals are simply eaten with fingers). Royalty have grand rooms called mead halls warmed by large fires where loyal retainers, huskarls, and guests sit at long tables and discuss politics, battle plans, and other matters over their feasts.

While the wisdom of the elderly is respected in Nordvanir society, old people are considered a great nuisance, and growing old is felt to be a great misfortune. It is common that if a doctor or midwife must be fetched from some remote place, the elderly hazard the journey by themselves. Most do not survive these sorts of trips, but that is, in fact, the idea.

The Nordvanir view magic with reverence. Though most view magicians, shamans, and seers with a distrustful superstition, nearly all respect both their wisdom and their powers, and most chieftains and kings have at least one magician whose council and abilities they seek out during times of trouble. The Nordvanirmen also employ a type of spellcasting called rune magic. By casting a handful of runes, a shaman or magician can grant protection, luck in a long voyage, or good fortune for an impending raid. The power of the runes are deep and mysterious, and most Nordvanirmen dare not delve into their mysteries without the proper training.

In addition to rune magic, another form of magic in Nordvanir pertains to the act of naming. By naming something, an object is imbued with power-or so the Nordvanirmen believe. In fact, most warriors name their swords, and the names they give tend to reflect their savagery in combat, such as Leg Biter, Widow Maker, Swift Killer, and so on. By naming their swords, the Nordvanirmen can sometimes awaken the blade's inner

power, creating a magical bond with between the weapon and their spirits. Wielders of such weapons often become figures of legend.

RULERS

The Nordvanirmen have no single ruler. At any one time, Nordvanir might have over one hundred kings and thrice as many chieftains. What separates a chieftain from a king is often the subject of debate, and by most foreign accounts purely subjective and a vague matter of semantics. It is common practice, however, that a chieftain may call himself king once he has a number of estates, towns, and villages under his control that it is impossible for him to visit them all in a single day.

Both king and chieftain alike rule by strength. Their power rests not with the fear of their subjects, as is the case for many monarchies, but rather the people's belief in the king's and chieftain's ability to protect them and bring them success. Rulers that fail to do either don't often sit for long atop their thrones.

GOVERNMENT AND LAW

The Nordvanir are a simple people but with a rather enlightened form of government and law. Local democratic assemblies called *"Things"* gather every year in special outdoor locations-usually near unusual or distinct and sometimes magical geological formations—called *Thingsteads*. There they set new laws, declare wars, elect new kings, and occasionally judge an unusual or important legal case.

On the occasion that a Nordvanir King gathers enough territory to make governing a trial, the lands are divided up into separate districts. Each district is then given its own *Thing*, comprised of the local landowners and aristocracy to set their own laws based on their own local customs and traditions. Each *Thing* is governed by a Lawspeaker, who, while the *Thing* is in session, holds absolute law and authority. The Lawspeaker is always chosen by a casting of rune stones and a reading of omens by a local shaman or magician, and it is a position of great esteem and respect.

The Lawspeaker is always older, wise, and male. Though just like in any civilization there are many laws, in Nordvanir, there is no formal entity responsible for enforcing the law. A lawbreaker can be expected to be dragged to the local chieftain or clan elders for summary judgment and immediate retribution by whoever has the strength and will to do so. Strangers who anger the Nordvanirmen are not given the luxury of being given an audience with an elder—thieving foreigners, violent drunken traders, and other foolish visitors simply meet a quick end from sharp steel.

Personal transgressions amongst the Nordvanirmen are often dealt with privately, either through some sort of agreed-upon recompense or duel. In fact, duels are so common that in the larger trading towns, it's difficult to go even one week without a duel being fought. They are even more common during times of peace when warriors are idle. Personal honor is of paramount importance to the Nordvanirmen, and being ashamed by one's peers is a more effective method of imposing laws and encouraging acceptable social behavior than a strong-arm police force ever could. The Nordvanirmen have a set of common values they expect all honest men and women to follow, and those who do not find themselves shunned and labeled and dishonorable:

- Keep your clothes and yourself clean
- Rise early and do not waste your day
- It is good to drink, but it is bad to get drunk
- Never be the friend of your friend's enemy
- Never lie-but you may reward a lie with a lie
- Always be honest and keep to your word
- Be polite to your guests. Offer them water and towels so they can wash themselves, and a warm spot by your fire

In addition to the above, all freemen in Nordvanir society are expected to pay taxes. Taxes are always paid in barter goods. One man may pay in bundles of wolf pelts, another with birds' feathers and whale bones. A noble might pay in martens, reindeer, and bearskins, or perhaps walrus tusks, which are always in high demand. Evading taxes is a penalty punishable by death.

Below are the largest Nordvanir settlements, along with their respective rulers.

VANGAL

Demographics
Population 75,000 (15,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Björn
The greatest trading center of the Nordvanir world, Vangal is home to 75,000 souls. A fort stands at a commanding position about 100 feet above the town's lake's edge at the southern edge, where common folk hide in the occasional event of an assault from another clan. Vangal is a large, walled town whose buildings are made from timber, wattle, and daub. There are plenty of anchorages and beaches for visiting ships, but little agricultural land, so the city exists mainly on trade.

Merchants from far and wide come here to bargain and barter. Common goods include fine wool cloth, furs, colorful winter coats of squirrels, blueblack jugs and pitchers, wine, glass mugs, and beads. Currently king Bjorn is organizing a crew of brave warriors to help hunt down an ancient and scarred kraken that has been plaguing ships in the area. Fear of the beast has driven down trade, and king Bjorn has promised a healthy sum of silver to the crew that helps him slay the beast and mount one of its gruesome tentacles in his great hall.

King Björn

7th-level human barbarian
AC 6, **HD** 7 (35hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +1* (1d8+3, named Giant's Tooth), **THACo** 14 (11 with *broadsword +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W9 P8 B10 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 15 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 12 **CON** 15 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, short bow, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *broadsword +1,* **Abilities** Cure Poison: in wilderness, gather herbs to concoct antidote to natural poisons (1 turn per subject; subject gets second save vs poison), Fear of Magic: refuses arcane magic/items; accepts tribal divine magic, Foraging and Hunting: party forages with 2-in-6 chance, finds prey hunting with 5-in-6 chance, Strike Invulnerable Monsters: from level 4, can hit monsters normally only harmed by magic

ORSE

Demographics
Population 25,000 (5,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Harald
This island is home to countless silver mines. A dangerous rival of Vangal, the Orsens have the fastest of all Nordvanir ships, making them one of the most prolific raiders in all the realm. Harsh granite cliffs ring most of this island, though there are some shelving beaches, which are ideal landing areas for their ships.

Monumental stones stand erect around the island. Their bas-relief pictographs are shaped like giant keyholes and explore different aspects of their history. They stand 11-feet tall on average.

King Harald

6th-level fighter

AC 5, **HD** 6 (41hp), **Att** 1 × battle axe (1d8+1, named Thunder Cleave), **THACo** 17 (16 with battle axe), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 9 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 13 **CON** 14 **CHA** 18, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, short bow, spear, sword, **Specializations** Battle axe

SWANE

Demographics
Population 60,000 (12,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Rorik

Swane began as three small villages that sat next to several streams near a large bay. Over time, the three villages joined together to form a larger-and strongercommunity.

Today, 40-foot-tall earthworks surround the town, enclosing over 60 acres of land. A palisade guards the harbor, along which stand several manned watchtowers. Two gates-a north and a south gate-allow ingress and egress. The streets are unpaved and filled with traders, foreigners, Nordvanirmen, chickens, and pigs, trampling the dirt into knee-deep mud. Planks are thrown down side by side for ease of travel. Already many dignitaries sent by the senate of Karth live and work here, vainly attempting to win over the populace and create a stable ally in the region.

King Rorik

7th-level fighter

AC 4, **HD** 7 (37hp), **Att** 1 × *two-handed sword +1* (1d10+4, named Long Shadow), **THACo** 14 (13 with *two-handed sword +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 16 **INT** 15 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 9 **CON** 12 **CHA** 14, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, short bow, spear, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword, **Possessions** *Two-handed sword +1*

NAXON

Demographics
Population 40,000 (8,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Rollo

Situated near Vangal, this trading town competes with its neighbor for foreign trade. To facilitate their edge in the competition, king Rollo has organized large slave hunting parties, and Naxon is quick becoming known as the slave-capital of Nordvanir.

King Rollo

5th-level fighter

AC 4, **HD** 5 (16hp), **Att** 1 × broadsword (1d8+1, named Raven Claw), **THACo** 17 (16 with broadsword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D9 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 15 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 12 **CON** 11 **CHA** 13, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, short bow, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *chain mail +1*

EDADOR

Demographics
Population 25,000 (5,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Grimur
This trading center is founded on wet, marshy land. What little liveable land there is lies squeezed between craggy hills. The sheltered bay is perfect, however, and offers excellent harbor facilities for the shallow-draught Nordvanir longships. The innumerable islands and shoals of the archipelago, which stretches across the mouth of the bay, make it difficult for intruders to find their way through the channels without the assistance of a pilot. Metal industry flourishes in this town, and talented smiths workday and night making iron, lead, bronze, silver, and gold. Textiles are also widely produced here, most of it for export or trade.

King Grimur

5th-level barbarian

AC 6, **HD** 5 (28hp), **Att** 1 × broadsword (1d8+2, named Heart Seeker), **THACo** 17 (15 with broadsword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W11 P10 B13 S13, **STR** 13 **INT** 13 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 15 **CON** 8 **CHA** 11, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, short bow, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Abilities**
Cure Poison: in wilderness, gather herbs to concoct antidote to natural poisons (1 turn per subject; subject gets second save vs poison), Fear of Magic: refuses arcane magic/items; accepts tribal divine magic, Foraging and Hunting: party forages with 2-in-6 chance, finds prey hunting with 5-in-6 chance, Strike Invulnerable Monsters: from level 4, can hit monsters normally only harmed by magic

VIDSITH

Demographics
Population 30,000 (6,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Valdemar
The largest community in the most northernmost region of Nordvanir, Vidsith is home to the most successful whale and walrus hunters in all the realm. When they aren't busy hunting, they are planning raids against their northern neighbors in Keln.

King Valdemar

6th-level ranger

AC 6, **HD** 6 (51hp), **Att** 1 × *battle axe +2* (1d8+4, named Hell Biter), **THACo** 17 (13 with *battle axe +2*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 15 **INT** 17 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 15 **CON** 15 **CHA** 10, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, short bow, spear, sword, **Specializations** Battle axe, **Possessions** *battle axe +2,* **Abilities** Awareness: surprised only on 1-in-6, Combat: any weapons; leather, chainmail, shields; no plate mail, Foraging and hunting: party succeeds at foraging 2-in-6; finds prey when hunting 5-in-6, Limited possessions: may only keep wealth/ possessions on person or mount; excess donated to worthy causes, Pursuit: when party pursues opposing group in wilderness, evasion chance reduced by 10%, Stealth: 3-in-6 hiding and 3-in-6 moving silently in the wilderness, Tracking: % chance by level (20% at L1, +10% per level to 100% at L9, then 110%); modifiers: soft/hard ground ±20–50%, group size +2%/ creature, tracks mingling –50%, age –5%/12hrs, rainfall –25%/hr, hiding tracks –25%

VOTH

Demographics
Population 50,000 (10,000 warriors)
Authority Figures: King Freydis
Voth is a settlement with diverse craft production and extensive trade with foreign countries. Commodities traded include iron, soapstone, and fish.

King Freydis

7th-level fighter

AC 5, **HD** 7 (23hp), **Att** 1 × longsword (1d10+4, named Long Shadow), **THACo** 14 (13 with longsword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 14 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 17 **CON** 12 **CHA** 10, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, dagger, short bow, spear, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword

PANTHEON

DUWANOTH, GOD OF KNWOLEDGE AND WAR

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Watching Blue Eye
The All Father

REGAK, GOD OF THE SEA AND STORMS

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Rough Ocean Waves
The drowned one

ALDER, GOD OF BEAUTY AND POETRY

Alignment: Neutral
Symbol: A Gem-Encrusted Chalice
The lover and sire of 1,000 bastards

YAFRA, GOD OF FERTILITY AND THE SUN

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: A Greatsword Wreathed in Ice-Blue Flames
Enemy of giants

LILITH, GODDESS OF DEATH

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: A Beautiful Woman's Face that is Rotting on One Side
She who comes for all

NPCS

BRYNJA STORMSHIELD

4th-level human fighter

Brynja Stormshield is a renowned Nordavanir shield maiden, celebrated for her courage, discipline, and refusal to yield before any foe. A veteran of countless battles along the northern frontiers, she has earned the respect of warriors and chieftains alike through her skill with axe and shield. Though many expected her to seek a husband and household, Brynja has chosen the warrior's path, forging a legend that rivals the greatest heroes of her people.

AC 5, **HD** 4 (25hp), **Att** 1 × battle axe (1d8+1, named Leg Biter), **THACo** 17 (16 with battle axe), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 11 **INT** 10 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 12 **CON** 15 **CHA** 17, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, short sword, short bow, spear, **Specializations** Battle-axe

SIGRUN ASH-BEARER

4th-level human fighter

Sigrun Ash-Bearer is a renowned Nordavanir shield maiden and the lover of Brynja Stormshield. Their relationship is one of passion, trust, and shared battle, forged through years fighting side by side against the enemies of their people. Sigrun is every bit Brynja's equal, matching her courage with fierce determination and an unbreakable will. Though some among the clans disapprove of their love, their victories have earned them admiration throughout the north. Her stats are identical to Brynja's, except she wields a hand axe instead of a battle axe, named Fang.

EIRIK FROVSTEIN

6th-level human sorcerer

Eirik Frostvein is a powerful Nordavanir sorcerer whose command of arcane forces has earned both admiration and suspicion among his people. Many warriors distrust his reliance on magic, believing true strength comes from axe, shield, and courage alone. Yet Eirik has defended his clan through storms, wars, and supernatural threats that few warriors could face. Though he walks apart from his kin, his loyalty to the Nordavanir has never been questioned.

AC 7, **HD** 6 (15hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 9 **INT** 14 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 17 **CON** 9 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *staff of fire ball* (5 charges), **Spells** *astrological prediction, fogbolt, alter dreams, hands of death, animal ally, sword of Skelos*

LEIF RAVENSONG

3rd-level human bard

Leif Ravensong is a wandering Nordavanir bard who believes the greatest sagas are not found in old halls, but forged in battle and adventure. He travels alongside raiders, explorers, and mercenaries, recording their deeds in stirring songs and epic poems before carrying their legends to feasting halls across the north. Cheerful, curious, and fearless despite carrying little more than a harp and a sword, Leif is welcomed wherever heroes seek to make their names immortal.

AC 7, **HD** 3 (7hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THAC0** 19, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 8 **INT** 15 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 11 **CON** 12 **CHA** 17, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short sword, **Spells** *faerie fire, purify water*

THRAIN STONEHELM

5th-level dwarf

Thrain Stonehelm is among the most respected dwarf sea-raiders of the Nordavanir, admired as much for his wisdom as for his prowess with the spear. Having led countless voyages across the **Middle Sea**, he has earned a reputation for courage, fairness, and unwavering loyalty to his crew. Younger warriors seek his counsel before setting sail, for Thrain is said to possess an uncanny instinct for both storms and battle.

AC 7, **HD** 5 (33hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THAC0** 17, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B10 S10, **STR** 15 **INT** 9 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 10 **CON** 16 **CHA** 16, **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, hand axe, short sword, spear, **Specializations** Spear

UNITS

Below is the mass-combat stat for the most common Nordvanir warrior unit.

NORDVANIR RAIDER
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 2
TOTAL HD: 200
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (battle axe or broad sword)
QUALITY: Superior
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +2
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
None

KELN

Capital: Darcathia; Androlia; Gilda; Essergorn; Wessergorn (see below)
Demographics: 75% human, 10% dwarf, 5% high elf, 5% halfling, 3% gnome, 2% other
Notable Settlements: Androlia (20,000 families; Market Value II), Wessergorn (15,000 families; Market Value II), Arslan (10,000 families; Market Value IV), Brythun (12,000 families; Market Value III), Nennius (10,000 families; Market Value IV), Darcathia (18,000 families; Market Value II), Gent (5,000 families; Market Value V); Ardoum (10,000 families: Market Value IV); Arlbruck (12,000 families; Market Value IV); Gilda (20,000 families; Market Value II); Hasling (5,000 families; Market Value V); Essergorn (15,000 families; Market Value III)
Population: 6 million people (1.2 million families)
Government: Pentarchy (ruled by 5 main feudal kingdoms)
Rulers: Five kings share power (see below)
Annual Treasury: Androlia = 91,000 pp; Wessergorn = 130,000 pp; Darcathia = 237,000 pp; Gilda = 220,000 pp; Essergorn = 187,000 pp
Expenses: Varies by kingdom
Common Trade Goods: Fish, iron, lead, salt, jewelry, glassware, weaponry, pottery, livestock, agriculture
Demand Values: Grain +1, livestock -1, lumber -1, slaves -1, wine +1, wool -2

Beasts of Peril: Basilisks, boars, bugbears, centaurs, cockatrices, dire wolves, dragons, dryads, fairies, faery dragons, gargoyles, giant boars, giant stags, goblinkind, hags, kobolds, leprechauns, merfolk, ogres, pseudodragons, trolls, unicorns, werewolves, wil o' wisps, wraiths

The people of Keln descend from several Nordvanir tribes. Long ago, having raided the southern coastlines of the isles (then known as the Isle of Breznog) for countless years, the Nordvanir began to settle upon the land. This great migration was not viewed with favor by the elves of Vala Aedain, who slaughtered the first inhabitants to a man. This did not deter the hardy Nordvanir, who, many years later, tried again, eventually establishing a foothold. Over

many, many generations, the elves were pushed back, farther and farther to the North, until at last a truce was declared. That was over 2,000 years ago.

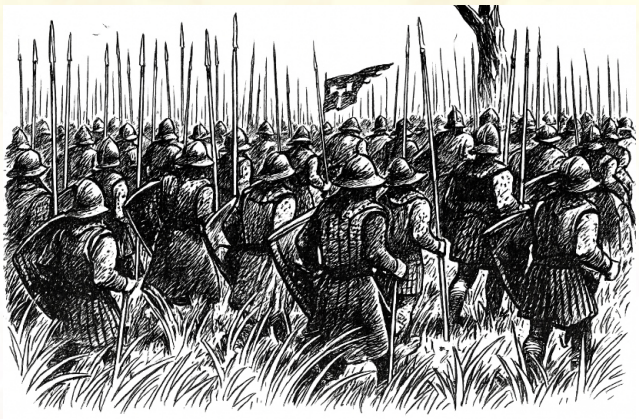
It's not just the tenacity and relentless numbers of the humans that won the truce, but the halflings and other fey folk who slowly began to ally with the humans. This reached a head when in -1,723 KR the high elves slaughtered a halfling shire for aiding the huamns. This turned the rest of the fey folk against the elves, who were appalled by their draconian methods.

After the wars ended, the Nordvanir began to settle across the countryside, renaming the isle "Keln," and soon fell into war against one another. These wars lasted for over 1,000 years, and a cultural shift began to occur, to the point where these small kingdoms soon had nothing in common with their Nordvanir ancestors, other than a militaristic outlook toward life (though to be fair, this is a common trait among all the human races).

The hardy men and women that populate the Keln countryside are more than simple farmers and fishermen; they have become skilled craftsmen and traders as well. Blacksmiths, weavers, tailors, jewelers, and potters are all viable trades in the Keln kingdoms, and finished goods are often traded with the outlying farmers for agricultural goods such as produce and livestock.

The people of Keln are also accomplished militarily, as being former raiders themselves has merit when forming a defense against seafaring invaders from Nordvanir. With a military lineage tracing back millennia, the people of Keln are most well-known for the tactic of the Shield Wall; a formation of soldiers standing side by side with their shields locked together to weather the storm of a charging bloodthirsty enemy.

They have also developed the "knight"—an elited, heavily armored mounted warrior born from nobility and trained from early childhood to kill. These powerful cavalrymen are the backbone of the kingdoms' might.



The people of Keln are known for building formidable defenses, including impressive castles of stone, timber, and earth that serve as the centers of power in each kingdom; the knights and soldiers inside standing guard as bastions against would-be aggressors.

The Keln people prefer loose organization at the local level, with the countryside often ruled by a nobleman, or lord, and those lords falling under the banner of the king. The five main kingdoms of various geographic and population sizes.

Given that a person lives within the borders of a kingdom, fealty to the king is considered to already be sworn by all those who would be protected under his banner. While this loose confederation of kingdoms has worked for the past one thousand years, it is becoming more certain with increasing clarity that in order to maintain their hold against the aggressive Nordvanir that the people of Keln will one day have to come together under a single common banner.

DAILY LIFE

Family and farming. The two terms are synonymous with traditional Keln life, as the peaceful rolling hills of the Keln countryside lend themselves well to a quiet and unassuming lifestyle for the lowliest of freemen, known as a serf.

Because of the relative ease in which the environment lends itself to agriculture, the people of Keln mostly use a barter system exchanging the abundance of agricultural goods for finished products from artisans. Farmers often will bring their harvest to the open market of the closest town or stronghold, and barter for items such as clothing, tools, jewelry, pottery, and weapons. Usually the trip into the market is a family event, so children running, playing, and carrying messages throughout the market square is a common sight.

As is the case across most of Keln, the farms are run by serf families, with extended family and often times slaves from the local thegn help round out the laboring hands. Farming tools are mostly made of wood; however, with the skilled craftsmen available in many towns of mentionable size, the farmers may have a few of their favored and well-used implements coupling metal heads with wood hafts.

Oxen, horses, cattle, goats, sheep, and chickens are common sights around a Keln farm, as are crops such as wheat, barley, corn, peas and beans. Many an intrepid farmer also function as bee-keepers, with the honey collected being a very valuable trade commodity, as it is the only sweetener used by the people of Keln. With a high availability of cereals and honey, the people of Keln are very accomplished in the art of creating spirited beverages such as beer, ale, and mead.

The average peasant family lives in a fairly comfortable dwelling compared to many other societies of the time; most dwellings consist of a wood or stone building with one or two rooms for living space, and a sturdy roof made of woven thatch.

Furniture is usually sparse, but a central hearth is an important gathering spot for the family. There usually is a roughhewn table for the family to dine together, a handful of chairs or benches for perching a weary farmer after a hard day's work in the fields, and workman stools for the womenfolk to sit while toiling in their household roles as the seamstress, cook, and cheesemaker (amongst other tasks) of the family.

While mysticism and magic abound in the Keln kingdoms, the common folk often view such happenings with great fear. Stories containing evil witches and warlocks, trickster feyfolk and raging demons are often used to scare children into staying close to the homestead. And while such magic is mostly misunderstood and seen as evil, families are often very superstitious, minding actions which could bring about curses or bad luck. The fears are not without warrant; magical creatures abound in some of the wild recesses of the countryside, many of which are not friendly to the people. Not to say that all magic is reviled amongst the Keln populace; rather common divine magics used by the clerics of the church are viewed with reverence, as many will bring their sick and injured to the abbeys and churches dotting the land in hopes of prayer and healing magics. Also, it is not unusual for kings and others in high court to employ both a personal cleric and a sorcerer for advisory purposes; after all, even if magic is not held in high regard, it is still a useful instrument for giving kings and lords an upper hand over possible rivals.

RULERS

The people of Keln are ruled by a Pentarchy, or five kings representing five main kingdoms. Each of the kingdoms are ranked in order of power, which includes factors such as military strength, geography, population size, and resources available. Currently, Darcathia is considered the most powerful of the kingdoms, and it is their king, Beorhtric, that holds the most sway in the Council of Kings.

The kings come to rule by inheriting the throne from their predecessors. If there are no male children, then the rule is passed to the family with the most political clout; hence the reason rulers of Keln are measured by their guile and political prowess as much as military track record. So often amongst the five kingdoms it is the smartest, most charismatic and cunning man that sits atop the throne, rather than simply the strongest.

CITIES OF KELN

Unlike the sprawling imperial cities of Karth or the ancient temple-cities of Nethia, the cities of Keln grew gradually over centuries around castles, abbeys, river crossings, and protected harbors. They were not planned by kings or architects but expanded generation after generation as walls were extended, markets enlarged, and neighborhoods absorbed surrounding villages. Consequently, no two cities are exactly alike. Their streets twist and curve according to ancient property lines, forgotten footpaths, and long-vanished streams. Buildings crowd together so tightly in older districts that upper stories nearly touch overhead, leaving the streets below in perpetual shadow.

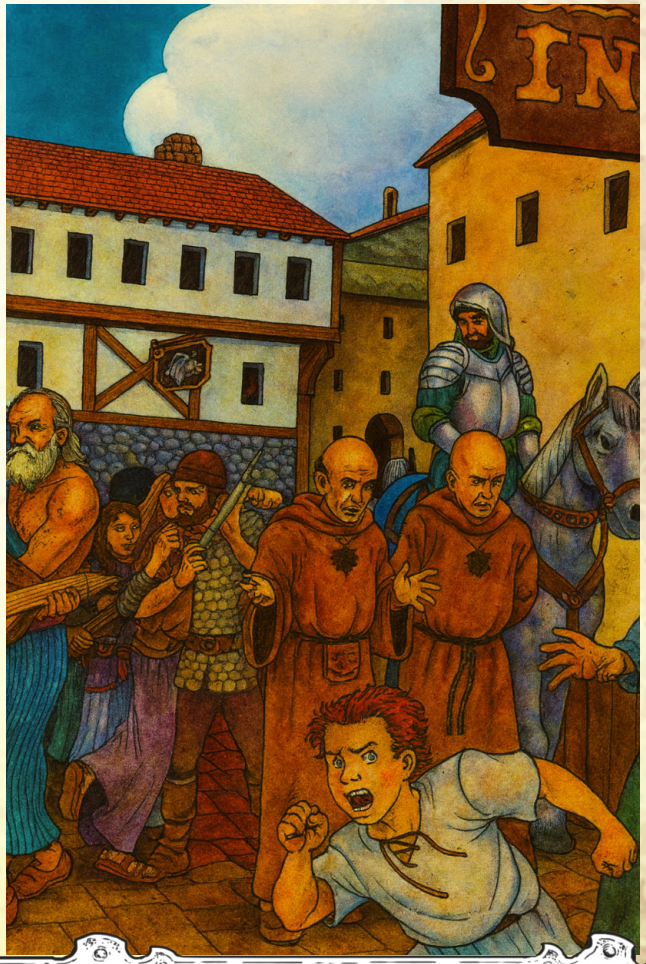
Most cities are surrounded by stout stone walls reinforced with towers and gatehouses. Outside these walls lie scattered farms, windmills, orchards, monasteries, and the manors of lesser nobles. Every city depends upon hundreds of surrounding villages for its survival, and those villages in turn rely upon the city as the center of commerce, justice, religion, and royal administration.

Though each of the Five Kings rules his own realm independently, visitors often remark that the cities of Keln possess a common character. Their architecture favors heavy timber frames filled with white plaster, steep slate or thatched roofs, narrow streets paved with worn stone, and marketplaces dominated by guild halls, churches, and noble townhouses. Smoke from countless hearths hangs perpetually over the rooftops, while the ringing of church bells marks the passing hours from dawn until dusk.

Keln remains fundamentally a feudal society. Nearly every acre of land ultimately belongs to one of the Five Crowns. Great lords hold estates from their king, lesser nobles hold lands from greater lords, and countless knights administer individual manors scattered across the countryside. Most peasants rarely travel farther than the neighboring village during their entire lives, spending their days farming grain, tending livestock, repairing fences, and fulfilling the obligations owed to their lord. The cities are different.

Within the walls live merchants, craftsmen, clergy, scholars, scribes, sailors, moneylenders, physicians, entertainers, laborers, and thousands of others whose livelihoods do not depend directly upon agriculture. Wealth flows constantly through these urban centers, and with it come opportunity and danger in equal measure

Although humans remain the overwhelming majority, nearly every civilized race of the **Middle Sea** can be found within the larger cities. Dwarven merchants negotiate contracts beside human bankers. Elven ambassadors walk among crowded marketplaces. Halfling traders operate



prosperous inns, while gnomish artisans produce intricate locks, clocks, and delicate mechanical devices. Foreign visitors are common enough that few citizens give them more than a passing glance unless their dress or behavior is particularly unusual.

COMMERCE

Commerce is the lifeblood of every Kelnic city.

The countryside produces wool, grain, cattle, timber, and iron, while merchants import wine from Thessadonia, spices from Pharos, silks from distant kingdoms, marble from Nethia, fine glass from Karth, and exotic luxuries from nearly every corner of the **Middle Sea**.

Most craftsmen belong to guilds, powerful organizations that regulate nearly every aspect of urban industry. A blacksmith cannot simply establish a forge without the approval of the Smiths' Guild. Bakers, masons, carpenters, shipwrights, coopers, goldsmiths, weavers, scribes, chandlers, and dozens of other professions maintain similar organizations

Guilds establish standards of quality, determine prices, settle disputes among their members, train apprentices, and wield considerable political influence. Many guildmasters possess wealth rivaling that of minor nobles.

The busiest part of any city is its market square, where hundreds of merchants gather beneath colorful awnings while town criers announce royal proclamations, traveling performers entertain crowds, and priests preach to anyone willing to listen.

THE TEMPLES

Religion permeates every aspect of Kelnic life.

Though many gods are worshipped throughout the isle, Lore, God of War, is recognized as first among equals. His temples dominate the centers of nearly every major city, often constructed of finely cut stone and surrounded by libraries, schools, scriptoria, and courts of law.

Priests serve not merely as spiritual leaders but as scholars, judges, teachers, physicians, and keepers of public records. Births, deaths, marriages, property transfers, treaties, and royal decrees are carefully copied and preserved within temple archives.

Other temples stand nearby, dedicated to the remaining gods of the Kelnic pantheon. It is common for citizens to pray to different deities according to circumstance—a merchant before beginning a voyage, a soldier before battle, a mother before childbirth, or a farmer before planting. Faith is woven into everyday life rather than reserved for holy days alone.

LAW AND ORDER

The cities of Keln are remarkably orderly by the standards of the Middle Sea, though maintaining that order requires constant vigilance.

Every city maintains a permanent watch under the authority of its king or his appointed sheriff. During daylight hours, patrols walk the markets, inspect gates, settle minor disturbances, and keep roads clear for commerce. After sunset the watch doubles in

size. Curfews are common, particularly during times of unrest.

Each city gate is guarded day and night. Travelers entering are questioned regarding their business, and large caravans may be inspected for contraband or stolen goods. Foreign merchants often pay entry tolls based upon the quantity and type of merchandise they carry.

The watch is not a standing army. Most guards are professional soldiers employed year-round, supplemented during emergencies by local militias composed of citizens required to perform military service when called upon.

Should violence erupt, nearby citizens are expected to assist. The ancient custom known as the hue and cry obligates every able-bodied resident who witnesses a serious crime to pursue the criminal alongside the city watch. Failure to do so without good reason may itself be punished.

JUSTICE

Justice in Keln is swift, public, and highly dependent upon one's social standing.

Minor disputes are generally settled by local magistrates appointed by the sheriff or the crown. Property disagreements, unpaid debts, and accusations of theft are heard within town courts, often in the presence of priests of Lore who serve as legal advisors.

Serious crimes such as murder, arson, treason, counterfeiting, and banditry are tried before royal judges or the king's own representatives.

Punishments vary widely.

Fines are the most common sentence for lesser offenses, particularly when property has been damaged or stolen. Public humiliation is equally popular. Criminals may be placed in stocks or pillories where neighbors pelt them with rotten fruit, mud, or worse.

More serious offenders may be branded, mutilated, imprisoned, or hanged.

Execution is generally reserved for crimes viewed as threats to the stability of the realm itself.

Contrary to popular belief, prisons are

relatively uncommon. Maintaining prisoners is expensive, and most punishments are designed either to compensate the victim or permanently remove the offender from society.

THE UNDERWORLD

Every city possesses another face after sunset.

Beggars crowd cathedral steps and market squares, some genuinely destitute, others serving as informants for criminal organizations.

Smugglers unload untaxed cargo beneath abandoned warehouses. Pickpockets work crowded festivals with astonishing efficiency Secret gambling dens flourish beneath respectable taverns.

Most large cities harbor at least one thieves' guild, though few openly acknowledge their existence. These organizations function less like random bands of cutthroats and more like clandestine merchant companies, regulating burglary, extortion, smuggling, and black-market trade. Unauthorized criminals often disappear quickly, for the guild values order within its own ranks.

Many city officials quietly tolerate these organizations so long as they avoid attracting excessive royal attention.

INNS AND TAVERNS

Travelers quickly discover that inns and taverns serve very different purposes. A tavern exists primarily to sell ale, food, and companionship. Local craftsmen gather after work, sailors celebrate successful voyages, laborers spend their wages, and musicians perform for appreciative crowds. Gambling, storytelling, business negotiations, and occasional fistfights are all commonplace. An inn provides lodging. The finest establishments offer private chambers furnished with feather mattresses, fireplaces, writing desks, and servants. More modest inns consist of a single common sleeping room where dozens of strangers share floor space around a central hearth. Privacy is a luxury reserved for the wealthy. Travelers are expected to secure their own valuables, for even reputable establishments cannot guarantee protection against every thief.

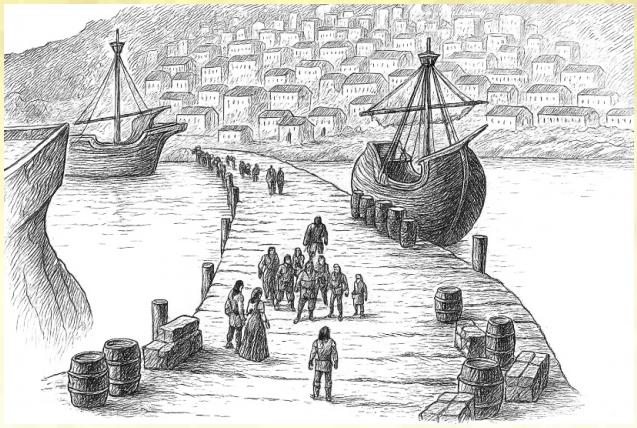
ARRIVING BY SEA

Entering one of Keln's great ports is a carefully regulated process rather than a matter of simply choosing an empty dock.

Long before reaching the harbor, an approaching vessel is observed from coastal watchtowers or harbor fortifications. Flags are raised announcing the ship's arrival, allowing harbor officials to prepare.

Upon entering the harbor mouth, a pilot boat often rows out to meet unfamiliar vessels. The harbor pilot, a local sailor intimately familiar with tides, currents, submerged rocks,

and shifting sandbars, boards the ship and assumes responsibility for navigating it safely into port. Captains who refuse a pilot are often denied entry altogether.



Rather than docking wherever space appears available, arriving ships anchor within designated waiting areas until assigned a berth by the harbor master. Large ports maintain detailed schedules governing arrivals and departures. Cargo vessels carrying grain or other necessities are frequently given priority over merchantmen transporting luxury goods.

Once tied alongside the quay, customs officials board the vessel before anyone is permitted ashore. Cargo manifests are examined, taxes assessed, prohibited goods confiscated, and passenger names recorded. Foreign merchants must often declare both the purpose of their visit and the expected duration of their stay.

Only after these formalities have concluded are gangplanks lowered and trade allowed to begin.

The docks themselves never sleep. Stevedores unload cargo from dawn until well after sunset. Cranes creak beneath enormous loads of timber and stone. Fishmongers shout prices over the cries of gulls. Sailors from every corner of the **Middle Sea** crowd alehouses while interpreters, moneychangers, warehouse clerks, and customs agents conduct business in a dozen different languages.

For many visitors, the harbor is their first glimpse of Keln, and it reveals the kingdom exactly as it is: prosperous, orderly, crowded, and governed by ancient customs that value law nearly as highly as wealth.

THE TROLVEK

Deep within the ancient northern forests dwell the trolvek, a reclusive people often mistaken for the monstrous trolls of the Land of the Thanes. While the two races share a distant common ancestry, countless centuries of isolation have transformed the trolvek into something altogether different. Where their southern cousins embody brutality and savagery, the trolvek are thoughtful, patient, and contemplative, possessing a quiet wisdom that many compare to the elder fey.

The trolvek stand as tall as common trolls, with broad shoulders, long limbs, and immense physical strength. Their skin ranges from mottled gray and moss-green to the dark brown of ancient bark, while their most distinctive feature is the pair of horns that crown every adult's head. No two sets are alike. Some grow like the branching antlers of a stag, others curl like a ram's, while still others twist into strange spirals or jagged spines. Among the trolvek, the shape of one's horns is considered a reflection of the individual's spirit rather than a mark of status or lineage.

Like all trolls, the trolvek possess remarkable regenerative abilities. Even grievous wounds knit together with astonishing speed, allowing them to survive injuries that would kill almost any other mortal. Unlike their savage kin, however, they do not rely upon this gift to wage reckless war. Instead, they value patience above haste, believing there are few problems that cannot be solved through careful thought and the passage of time.

Though not truly fey, the trolvek possess a temperament much closer to the creatures of the Fey Realm than to the corrupted races of the Thanes. They live in harmony with the forests, regard ancient trees and streams with profound reverence, and are said to know hidden paths that seem to vanish from memory as soon as they are walked. Their oral traditions speak of pacts made with forest spirits in ages long forgotten, and many Kelnic scholars believe traces of fey magic still linger within their blood.

The trolvek generally avoid the kingdoms of Keln, viewing the expansion of roads, farms, and settlements with quiet unease rather than open hostility. Most humans spend their entire lives without ever seeing one. On rare occasions, however, a village elder, wandering knight, or

priest of Lore may earn the trust of a trolvek, and stories persist of wise horned giants offering cryptic counsel, guiding lost travelers from dangerous woods, or intervening against unnatural evils that threaten the ancient forests they call home.

IMPORTANT CITIES

While large cities are few and far between in the Keln realm, there are several that have become veritable metropolises. Below are the five capitals of the five kingdoms.

DARCATHIA

Population: 90,000 people
Authority Figures: King Beorhtric
Darcathia is called a center of trade for many nations visiting by land and sea. The biggest most elaborate trading hub in all of Keln, the population size is fairly modest considering its importance to the Keln kingdoms. The city sits astride the River Mahat, with most of the sprawl stretching about one mile away from the Ludenburg, which is the large stone fortress constructed by them. The fortress is currently occupied by King Beorhtric, the ruler of the largest and most influential kingdom, Darcathia. The mouth of the River Fleet serves as the port harbor for visiting trading ships, as well as the staging point for Darcathia's meager fleet of defense vessels. Common trading goods include agriculture of the surrounding lands such as vegetables and fruits, cattle, and wool from sheep. Timber and metal worked goods are also traded in abundance, while artistic items such as pottery are scarcer, as the Darcathians are not known to be an artistic or culturally diverse people.

King Beorhtric, 9th-level fighter

AC 2, **HD** 9 (70hp), **Att** 1 × *longsword +1* (1d10+3), **THACo** 14 (11 with *longsword +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B5 S8, **STR** 13 **INT** 8 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 14 **CON** 16 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword, **Possessions** *mail +2, longsword +1*

GILDA

Population: 100,000 people
Authority Figures: King Aethelred
Gilda is a major hub for trading and crafting. The hills surrounding Gilda are rife with caves that the local tales say hide the remains of ancient treasures. Intrepid adventurers may be lured to the promise of easy riches, even though sometimes those who venture into the caves are never heard from again.

King Aethelred, 9th-level fighter

AC 0, **HD** 9 (37hp), **Att** 1 × *bastard sword +2* (1d8+4, or 2d4+4 two handed), **THACo** 14 (10 with *bastard sword +2*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B5 S8, **STR** 13 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 10 **CON** 10 **CHA** 13, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *bastard sword +2, ring of invisibility*

WESSERGORN

Population: 75,000 people
Authority Figures: King Wihtred
In the forests near Wessergorn, there are tales of a rogue druid circle attempting to undermine Wessergorn's defenses to allow the more chaotic but less religion-driven Nordvanirmen into the city.

Berhwald is looking to hire a party of stout adventurers to not only investigate the druids, but ultimately drive them away from Wessergorn's outskirts all together.

King Wihtred wields a great sword named Lûmecar. Its purpose is to serve righteousness. It was created in the Age of the Feywild, but it abandoned its elvish owner centuries ago when that owner participated in the slaughter of the halfling shire. It has since found its way to the current dynasty.

King Wihtred, 10th-level fighter

AC 0, **HD** 10 (45hp), **Att** 1 × *greatsword +3* (1d10+5 with greatsword +3), **THACo** 12 (7 with *greatsword +3, Lûmecar*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B5 S8, **STR** 15 **INT** 9 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 13 **CON** 14 **CHA** 14, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword, **Possessions** *full plate +1, Lûmecar: sentient greatsword = INT 12; SENSORY POWERS: detect evil or good, see invisible objects; EXTRAORDINARY POWERS: extra damage, teleportation, healing*

ANDROLIA

Population: 100,000 people
Authority Figures: King Aldfrith
Most of Androlia, including its fortress, sits atop high ground on a hill overlooking the plains below. The plains often flood during winter and spring rains, however, this makes for great agricultural conditions, lending itself to a bountiful harvest year after year.

King Aldfrith wields Fey Slayer, a greatsword his forebears used to battle the elves long ago.

King Aldfrith, 8th-level fighter

AC 2, **HD** 8 (34hp), **Att** 1 × *greatsword +1, +3 vs enchanted creatures* (1d10+3), **THACo** 14 (11 with *greatsword +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 15 **INT** 15 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 15 **CON** 10 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword, **Possessions** *greatsword +1, +3 vs enchanted creatures*

ESSERGORN

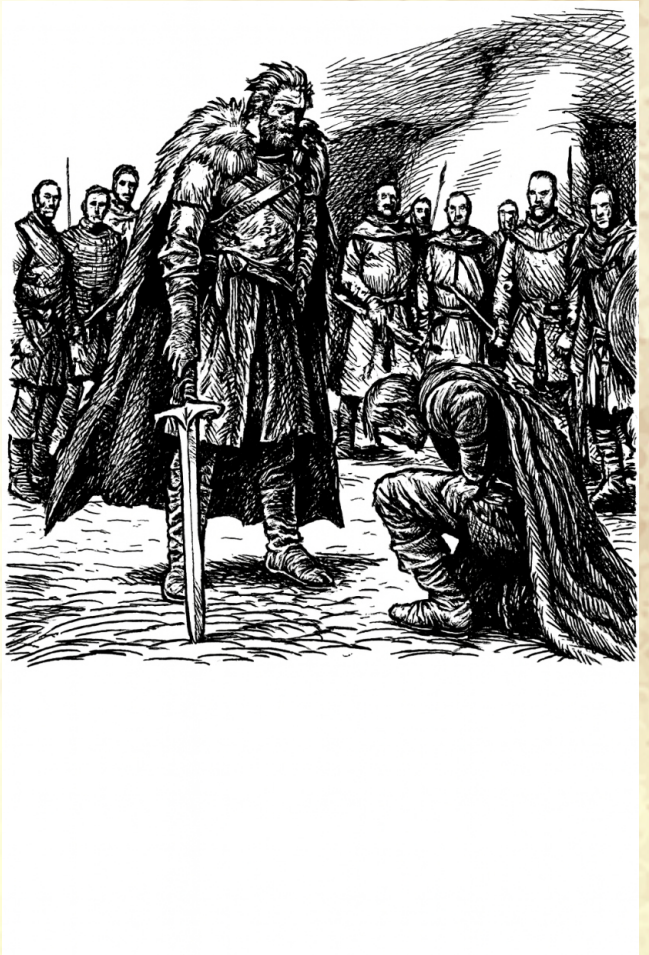
Population: 75,000 people
Authority Figures: King Ine
Essergorn has a large stone fortress along with several stout wooden fortifications both around the city proper and the palace that serves as the seat of power. Situated on the east coast of the Keln kingdoms, Essergorn is fairly secure from the most worrisome threats such as Nordvanir invaders; however, the cliffside is said to be home of one of the oldest and most destructive red dragons the realm has ever seen, Vermithrax.

King Ine, 7th-level fighter

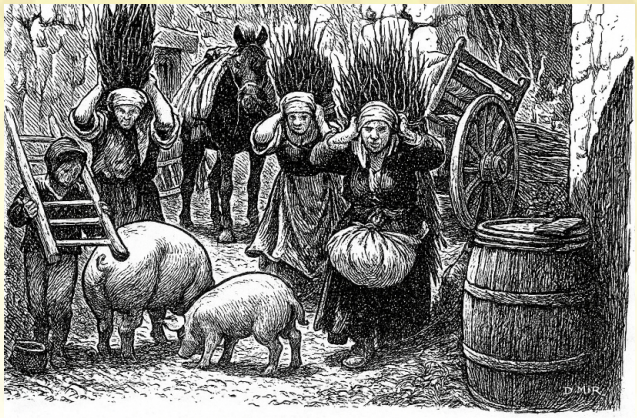
AC 6, **HD** 7 (25hp), **Att** 1 × *war hamer +1* (1d8+4), **THACo** 14 (10 with *war hammer +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 16 **INT** 9 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 10 **CON** 11 **CHA** 11, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Lance, longbow, spear, sword, war hammer **Specializations** War hammer, **Possessions** *war hammer +1*

MANORIALISM

The five kingdoms of Keln are feudal, and its primary economic system is manorialism. In this system, each king grants land to the nobility class. Such landowners are known as “magnates.” These magnates have titles such as count, earl, or duke, depending on the region of Keln (they are called count in Androlia and Darcathia; earls in Gilda; and dukes in Wessergorn and Essergorn). The amount of land a magnate is granted depends upon his rank and prestige, but averages around 25,000 acres (remember, in the **Middle Sea**, one hex = 1,280,000 acres, with nearly 500,000 of it being arable land). Each magnate then grants land to his knights. A knight receives 1,200 to 1,800 acres (1,500 on average). A typical magnate usually has 12 to 15 knights under his banner. A knight granted such a land is known as a "lord.”



The knight lives in a fortified home or castle, and the land he controls is called a "manor." His home is the "Manorhouse." The knight then parcels out arabal land to peasant families known as "serfs," who are bound to the land and their liege lord—they are not allowed to leave.



A typical peasant family has 5 people and is granted 30 acres of land. An average manor usually has about 25 families living in its village. The manor will usually have some other craftsmen on it as well, such as a smith, a carpenter, a fletcher, a butcher, and a miller.

The lord typically also hires a bailiff, who acts as the authority figure, ensuring no one is causing trouble, everyone is paying taxes, and everyone is properly fined should they break any of the lord's rules.

Sometimes the lord will grant land to people in exchange for military servie. These individuals are known as yeomen, and unlike serfs, they are free to leave the land without the lord's permission—they are not bound to it.

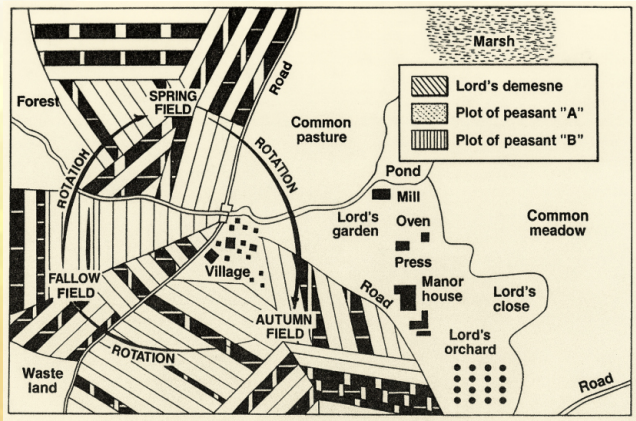
The lord takes roughly 1/3 to 1/2 of the crop yileds from his manor, allowing the serfs or yeomen to keep the rest, which they may take to the nearest market to barter or sell as they see fit. The serfs must also take time to work fields whose crops belong directly to the lord. This land is known as the "demesne," and usually takes up 1 day of the week.

In exchange for the manor, the lord is expected to provide military service to his magnate whenever the magnate calls him into action for a military campaign. When this happens, the lord summons a levy—all of his yeomen, plus a handful of serfs of fighting age are told to assemble with him and march out for war. A typical lord can usually provide 4 men-at-arms (these are usually retainers and memebrs of his household, such as his sons), 5 peasant archers, and 25 yeomen.

Therefore, a magnate with 15 manors on his land could be expected to bring 15 knights, 60 men-at-arms, 75 archers, and 375 yeomen, plus his own household retainers. Thus a king with more magnates can summon a greater army under his banner.

Because all of these various soldiers take orders directly from their lord, and the lord directly from his magnate, it's very important for house symbols to be easily recognizeable while on the march and on the battlefield. This is why heraldry in Keln is so important, with each noble house have both banners and shields with their symbols prominently displayed for all to see.

If called upon to go to war, lords and magnates may abstain from the battle by paying a fee. This tradition is called "scutage," and the fee varies, depending on how many troops he would otherwise normally bring to the battle. The amount in scutage due usually allows the king to hire an equal number of mercenaries. A king may deny scutage at his discretion, however.



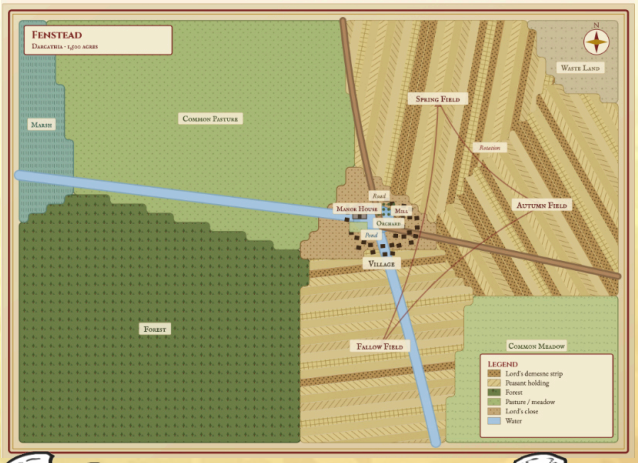
On average, there are 500 manors per hex (ergo, 500 villages; urban centers, such as towns, are scarce and far between), and each hex can levy 500 knights, 1,00 men-at-arms, 2,500 infantry, 2,500 pikemen, 1,000 bowmen, and 100 hobilars (light cavalry). Traditionally, the levy disbands after 4 months, everyone going back to work their fields.

MANOR MAKER

I created a companion app that is a feudal village and manor generator for the **Middle Sea**'s Kingdom of Keln, modeling manorialism in the tradition of the *Hârn Manor* supplement. It rolls up an entire settlement in one pass — naming every villager and picking their race, and naming the village itself if you don't — then draws a map that accurately reflects the number of homes for the families present and the proportions of field, marsh, woodland, and more:

THE STEWARD'S ROLL

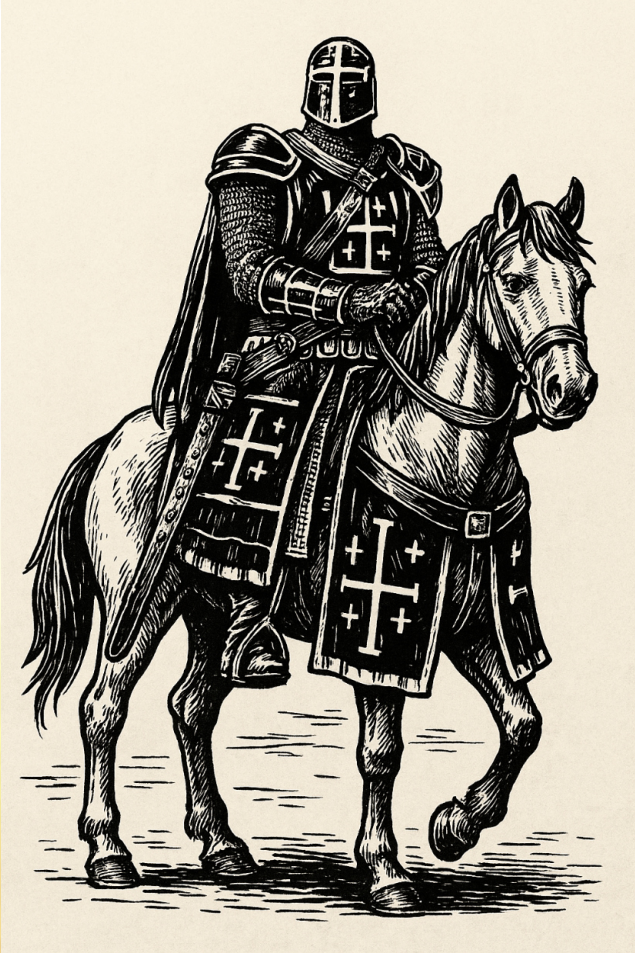
Here is an example of a randomly created manor map based on the inputs:



KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES

Knights are an elite class of warrior who begin training at the age of 7. At age 13, the young soldier-to-be is taken under the direct training of a knight, becoming a "squire." The squire's duties are largely menial, such as cleaning the knight's armor; helping him don his armor during combat; taking his horse from the field of combat if the knight decides to dismount; and if need be, defend the knight and help him retreat from the battlefield should a battle go poorly.

Once the squire turns 18, he then becomes a knight, usually in a grand ceremony. He is granted the title of "Sir." If a magnate wishes to take him under his service, he may become a household knight—living in the magnate's castle or on his manor—or he may be granted land and run a manor (though knights rarely are granted land when so young; they usually have to survive at least until age 30, and have proven themselves in battle, courage, and loyalty).



TOURNEYS

To keep their skills of warfare sharp, the five kingdoms regularly host grand tournaments where knights from across the realm can come and battle for coin, prestige, and honor. These week-long competitions include archery, jousting, grand melee, horse racing, and wrestling, and every knight includes a feast. Entering a tournament costs 100 silver, and the grand prize for each competition is 100 pp, except for jousting, which is 150 pp. Each kingdom takes turns hosting the tourney every year on a rotating fasion.

THE MARCHER LORDS

While there are countless magnates, lords, and castles through the Keln Isles, only a handful have the distinguished title of Marcher Lord. The Marcher Lords are lords who control a manor in a historically vital strategic defensive position along the border. Even though they are not magnates, the Marcher Lords, as they are the first line of defense, have the authority to summon the levies of all other lords in a two-hundred-mile radius in defense of the realm, should the need arise.

Two of the most well-known Marcher Lord castles are Boar Hall and Kovington-Kross.

The castle of Kovington-Kross

PANTHEON

LORE, GOD OF WAR

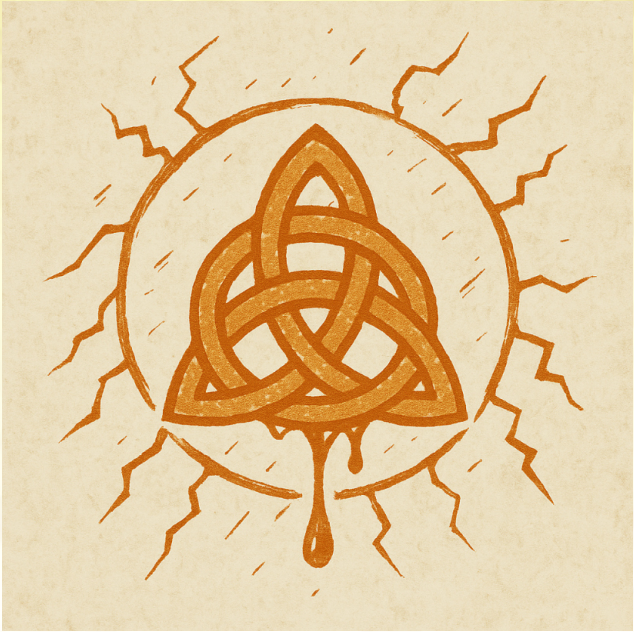
Alignment: Lawful

Symbol: A Fiery Sword or the Sun

Son of the Nordvanir god Duwanoth and a mortal woman who ascended and began his own pantheon

Kalina, Goddess of Storms

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: An Eternity Knot
Wife of Lore



Ashanna, Goddess of Music and the Arts

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: Stars Set in a Spiral Pattern
Daughter of Lore and Kalina

Ariarawn-Og: God of Wisdom

Alignment: Lawful
Symbol: A Wise Old Treant
A god that has been worshipped on the isle since the Age of the Feywild

Nyralath: God of Death and Madness

Alignment: Chaotic
Symbol: Writhing Tentacles Emerging from a Chalice
He Who Dwells Beneath the Waves; an ancient Elder Being that has lived on the isle since the Age of Titans

NPCS

ESHA

10th-level satyr thief

Esha is a notorious satyr thief whose exploits have become the stuff of tavern songs throughout Keln. Agile, charming, and impossibly elusive, she has robbed nobles, guildmasters, and even royal treasuries, always staying one step ahead of the law. Her most prized possessions are a matched pair of enchanted daggers stolen from the tomb of a long-dead Cymran sorcerer. In Esha's hands, the twin blades move with such speed and precision that few survive to face them twice.

AC 7, **HD** 10 (43hp), **Att** 2 × *daggers +3, life stealing* (1d4+3), **THACo** 14 (11 with *daggers +3, life stealing*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P5 B8 S7, **STR** 9 **INT** 14 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 16 **CON** 17 **CHA** 13, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, javelin, short sword, sling, **Possessions** matching *daggers +3 (life stealing), potion of invisibility,* **Abilities** Backstab, Open Locks 60%, Find/Remove Traps 55%, Pick Pockets 65%, Move Silently 65%, Climb Sheer Walls 96%, Hide in Shadows 55%, Hear Noise 1-4 (1d6)

PRINCE ALRIC: PRINCE OF WESSERGORN, SON OF KING WIHTRED

4th-level human fighter

Prince Alric has recently taken over duties as Lord of Arslan, protecting the city against Nordvanir raiders. He has recently increased diplomatic ties with the high elves of Vala Aedain, who gifted him magical armor and a magical sword. Some back in the royal court find the prince's courtship of their traditional enemies worrisome.

AC 3, **HD** 4 (24hp), **Att** 1 × *bastard sword +1, light* (1d8+3 or 2d4+3 two handed), **THACo** 14 (11 with *bastard sword +1, light*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S13, **STR** 13 **INT** 10 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 11 **CON** 16 **CHA** 14, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, lance, longbow, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *breastplate +1* (also grants a +1 bonus to save versus spells, already calculated above), *bastard sword +1 (light)*

HIGH PRIEST ALDREN

8th-level human cleric

High Priest Aldren of Gilda is the aging head of the Temple of Lore, a retired adventurer whose wisdom and compassion have guided the faithful for decades. Though beloved by his flock, he quietly struggles with alcoholism, seeking refuge from memories of the horrors he witnessed in his younger years. His burden has never dimmed his kindness or sense of justice, and many believe there is no finer spiritual leader in all of Keln, despite his very human flaws.

AC 10, **HD** 8 (35hp), **Att** 1 × *mace +1* (1d6+1), **THACo** 14 (13 with *mace +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D3 W5 P7 B8 S7, **STR** 12 **INT** 10 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 8 **CON** 11 **CHA** 14, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, sling, staff, war hammer, **Abilities** Turn the Undead, **Spells** *detect magic, resist cold, purify food and water, silence 15' radius, bless, charm animal, cure disease, growth of animals, dispel magic*

QUEEN BESSA, QUEEN OF ANDROLIA, WIFE OF KING ALDFRITH

5th-level human fighter

Called the Warrior Queen, Queen Bessa has in recent years created quite a name for herself battling Nordvanir raiders.

AC 6, **HD** 5 (25hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with short sword), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 8 **INT** 10 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 9 **CON** 12 **CHA** 15, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short bow, short sword, spear, **Specializations** Short sword

VELLA

10th-level elf magic-user

Vella is an elven magic-user whose quick wit and mastery of arcane magic have saved her companions more times than she can count. An insatiably curious scholar of forgotten ruins and ancient magic, she often accompanies the satyr thief Esha on dangerous expeditions in search of lost relics and hidden lore. Where Esha relies on daring and instinct, Vella tempers her with careful planning, making the pair an unexpectedly formidable team.

AC 8, **HD** 10 (24hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D7 W8 P7 B10 S8, **STR** 12 **INT** 16 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 10 **CON** 12 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *ring of protection*, *staff of wizardry* (21 charges), *scroll of protection from magic*, **Spells** *detect magic, sleep, shield, continual light, detect evil, wizard lock, lightning bolt, hold person, protection from normal missiles, wizard eye, growth of plants*

ZHARETH

Zhareth is a drow exile whose betrayal of her own people helped the legendary adventurers Scythax, Ella, and Esha defeat the Underdark incursion into Androlia three years ago. After capturing the human warrior Airk, she fell in love with him and turned against the invaders, providing the defenders with crucial intelligence. Airk died in the battle, and though Keln granted Zhareth clemency, she remains an outcast, wandering the forests alone with only grief and memories for company.

For stats use drow.

SIR ALARIC

5th-level human knight

Sir Alaric of Westmere is a noble knight from the Kingdom of Wessergorn, celebrated for his unwavering honor and steadfast devotion to the chivalric code. A veteran of border wars and monster hunts, he is as courteous in the halls of kings as he is fearless upon the battlefield. Though many younger knights seek glory, Sir Alaric believes a true knight's first duty is to protect the weak and uphold justice, no matter the personal cost.

AC 4, **HD** 5 (29hp), **Att** 1 × broadsword (1d8+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with broadsword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 14 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 14 **CON** 17 **CHA** 12, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, Specializations Sword, **Abilities** See knight class

QUEEN ELSWYTH, QUEEN OF GILDA

Queen Elswyth of Gilda is an ambitious and fiercely proud monarch whose dreams of conquest often place her at odds with her more cautious husband. Believing Keln's destiny lies in expansion, she relentlessly urges her son, Prince Cyngar, to pursue the long-held ambition of invading Lusatania. Elegant, charismatic, and exceedingly vain, Elswyth craves the glory, wealth, and prestige that victory would bring, convinced history remembers only those bold enough to seize greatness. For stats use noble.

PRINCE CYNGAR: CROWN PRINCE OF GILDA

5th-level human knight

Prince Cyngar has been urging his father to launch an invasion of Lusatania to retake New Gilda. His heart burns with a desire for vengeance against both the Lusatanians and the Karthans to reclaim his people's honor, and his warmongering has slowly been gaining support amongst some of the nobles, who view the prospect as a chance to increase their power and wealth.

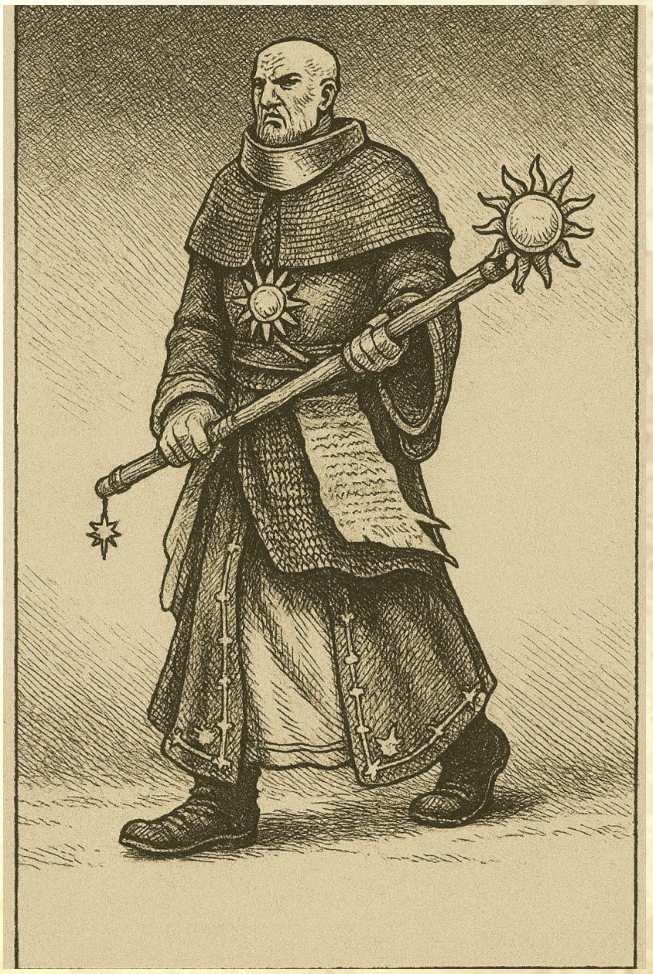
AC 1, **HD** 5 (19hp), **Att** 1 × bastard sword (1d8+2, or 2d4+2 two handed), **THACo** 17 (15 with broadsword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 14 **CON** 17 **CHA** 12, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, Specializations Sword, **Abilities** See knight class

BISHOP DEODAN: WARRIOR CLERIC OF WESSERGORN

5th-level human cleric

A fanatic, Bishop Deodan is alive with the holy spirit, hunting down and slaughtering pagans wherever he can find them. Because the fey folk are historically enemies of Keln, most view the druidic religions as evil, and Deodan is no exception. He and his followers will not rest until all of Keln is purged of such unholy practices.

AC 1, **HD** 5 (16hp), **Att** 1 × mace (1d6+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with mace), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **STR** 13 **INT** 10 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 13 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, flail, mace, staff, **Abilities** Turn the Undead, **Spells** *protection from evil, resist cold, light, know alignment, speak with animal*



SIR VALA OF PALMBROOK: CHAMPION KNIGHT

6th-level human paladin

Sir Vala made a name for herself last year by winning the grand melee in the annual tourney. She has since been granted a manor in the southern lands of Androlia, inheriting land whose previous lord was slaughtered by a Nordvanir raid.

AC 0, **HD** 6 (31hp), **Att** 1 × war hammer (1d6+2), **THAC0** 17 (15 with war hammer), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B11 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 12 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 11 **CON** 14 **CHA** 12, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, lance, mace, war hammer, **Specializations** War hammer, **Abilities** Holy resistance, turning the undead, laying on hands: 1/day, heal 2 HP per level; from 5th level, cure disease 1/week by laying on hands

SIR JAYCEN OF DARCATHIA: CAPTAIN OF THE DARCATHIAN ROYAL GUARD

8th-level human fighter

Sir Jaycen has been the captain of the royal guard of Darcathia for over 20 years. He is completely loyal to the crown, and as head of security, he is often in contact with adventurers and mercenaries, whom he prefers to hire for discreet quests and missions.

AC 1, **HD** 8 (30hp), **Att** 1 × bastard sword (1d8+2, or 2d4+2 two handed), **THAC0** 14 (12 with bastard sword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 7 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 13 **CON** 15 **CHA** 10, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, lance, longbow, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Sword

LORD VALERIAN

5th-level human werewolf

Lord Valerian of Darcathia is a minor noble whose reputation for lavish feasts, orgies, and extravagant hunts hides a far darker truth. After being cursed with lycanthropy during a hunt, he embraced the beast within and founded a secret cult of werewolves among his followers. Beneath the guise of aristocratic revelry, Valerian hosts forbidden gatherings where captives are hunted through his forests, leaving terror and bloodshed in his wake.

AC 9, **HD** 5 (34hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6+1), **THACo** 15 (14 with short sword), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 11 **INT** 13 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 16 **CHA** 14, **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, spear, short sword, **Specializations** Short sword, **Forms**: Human/demihuman / Dire wolf / Hybrid wolf-man (180'(60'))
AC: 3 · Attacks: 1x bite (2d4+2)
Weapons: may also use weapons in hybrid form

PRINCESS AVELINE

4th-level human fighter

Princess Aveline of Essergorn has devoted her life to avenging the death of her elder brother, who fell alongside a company of brave knights while attempting to slay the ancient red dragon Vermithrax. Since that day, she has trained relentlessly in the arts of war, refusing every proposal of marriage that might distract from her purpose. Many admire her courage, while others fear her obsession will one day lead her to the same fiery fate as her brother.

AC 0, **HD** 4 (17hp), **Att** 1 × bastard sword (1d8+1 or 2d4+1 two handed), **THACo** 17 (16 with bastard sword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 11 **INT** 10 **WIS** 17 **DEX** 17 **CON** 12 **CHA** 16, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short sword, sword
Specializations Sword

ROWAN ASHCLOAK

12th-level human druid

Archdruid Rowan Ashcloak is a wandering servant of the old ways who roams the five kingdoms of Keln with neither home nor master. Revered by druids and common folk alike, he settles disputes, blesses harvests, tends ancient sacred groves, and opposes those who would upset the balance of nature. Kings have sought his counsel, yet Rowan remains loyal only to the land itself, believing every crown is temporary, while the forests and seasons endure forever.

AC 5, **HD** 12 (41hp), **Att** 1 × *staff +3* (1d4+3), **THACo** 14 (11 with *staff +3*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **STR** 12 **INT** 10 **WIS** 18 **DEX** 12 **CON** 13 **CHA** 14, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, sling, spear, staff, **Possessions** *staff +3, boots of traveling and leaping, potions of speed* **Spells** *detect magic, locate animals or plants, predict weather, purify water, speak with animals, create water, heat metal, charm person or mammal, obscure, produce flame, hold animal, call lightning, summon insects, tree shape, protection from fire, cure serious wounds, produce fire, command plants, protection from lightning, anti-plant shell, insect plague, transmute rock to mud, moonbeam,* **Abilities** Charm Immunity: from level 7, immune to charms of fairies and Sylvan creatures (dryads, nixies), Energy Resistance: +2 saves vs electricity (lightning) and fire, Identification: identify all plants and animals, discern pure water, Pass Without Trace: from level 3, pass through natural environments leaving no tracks; move through overgrown areas at normal speed, Path-Finding: party has only 1-in-6 chance of getting lost in woodland Shape Change: from level 7, change into reptile/bird/mammal once per day each; up to ~2x normal bulk; regain 1d4 HP per level on change; equipment absorbed and reappears

SIR BRYCE OF GOLDFIELD: LORD OF GOLDFIELD MANOR

5th-level human fighter

Sir Bryce is the lord of Goldfield, a manor neighboring Palmbrook Manor. Even though most of the other lords in the region resent a female lord inheriting land in their realm, Sir Bryce has taken a liking to the Lady Vala.

AC 4, **HD** 5 (15hp), **Att** 1 × war hammer (1d6+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with war hammer), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 11 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 15 **CON** 15 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Lance, longbow, spear, war hammer, **Specializations** War hammer

LADY AERITHIEL OF HOUSE CELETHOR

4th-level elf

Lady Aerithiel of House Celethor is a noble-born elven warrior from the northern sylvan realm of Vala Aedain, sent to Wessergorn three years ago as an official emissary. Graceful, disciplined, and fiercely devoted to her duties, she has nevertheless found herself torn between loyalty to her homeland and her heart. During her time in Keln, she and Prince Alric have fallen deeply in love, carrying on a secret affair that, if discovered, could ignite a diplomatic crisis between their peoples.

AC 4, **HD** 4 (15hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +1* (1d8+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with *broadsword +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P11 B13 S12, **STR** 11 **INT** 11 **WIS** 18 **DEX** 14 **CON** 11 **CHA** 12, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, longbow, mace, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *broadsword +1,* **Abilities** Infravision 60', detect secret doors 2-in-6, immune to ghoul paralysis, hear noise 2-in-6, move silently in non-metal armor, **Spells** *read languages, detect magic, ESP*

KALADOS THE LEPER: HIGH PRIEST OF GAIZ

5th-level gnome cleric

Hailing from Lusatania, Kalados was a worshiper of the goddess Gaiz before being blessed with the disease of leprosy. When the Keln kingdom of Gilda invaded Lusatania, Kalados used the opportunity to get into the good graces of the nobility, using his contacts to purchase a small bit of land on an island off the southern shores of the isle. He created a leper colony, having each kingdom send their wretched afflicted, promising to care for them there. Instead, he converted them all to be worshipers of Gaiz. Those who refuse are sacrificed to her. He now has a well-constructed fortress on his island and over 300 followers—30 of them clerics. To facilitate his growth, he has agents throughout the Keln kingdoms, spreading leprosy and waiting for the Keln kingdom to send them to him.

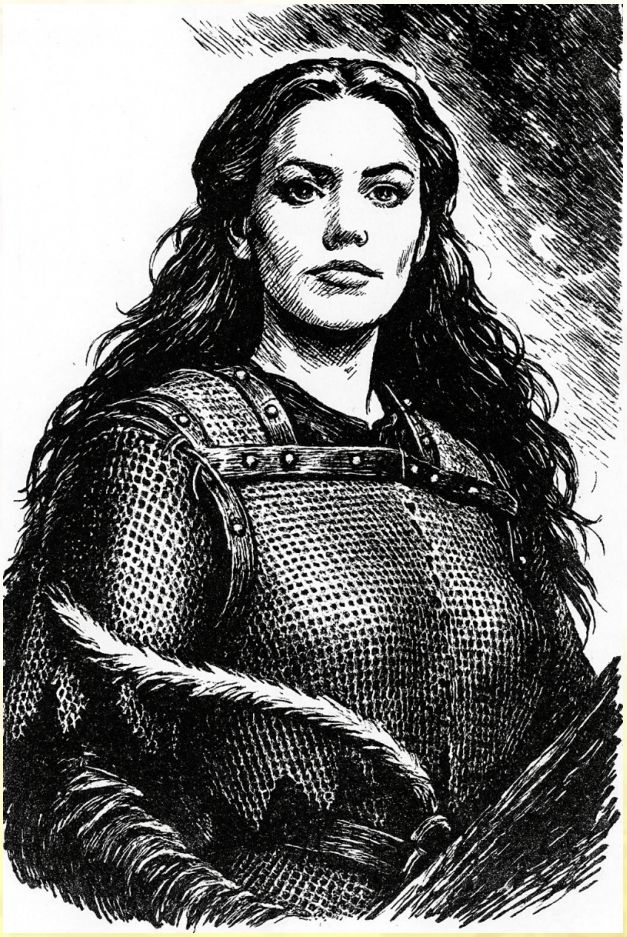
AC 10, **HD** 5 (11hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **STR** 10 **INT** 13 **WIS** 17 **DEX** 12 **CON** 6 **CHA** 11, **ML** 6, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, flail, mace, staff, **Abilities** Turn the Undead, **Spells** *purify food and water, detect evil, remove fear, bless, hold person*

CANDRA KOVINGTON OF KOVINGTON-KROSS

3rd-level human fighter

Candra Kovington is the only child of Sir Tomas Kovington, lord of Kovington-Kross, and has little interest in the life expected of a noble lady. Much to her father's frustration, she spends every spare hour training with the castle's master-of-arms, mastering the sword, bow, and lance. Headstrong, fearless, and fiercely independent, Candra dreams of earning renown on the battlefield rather than securing it through marriage and courtly intrigue.

AC 3, **HD** 3 (12hp), **Att** 1 × crossbow (1d6+1), **THACo** 19 (16 with crossbow), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 10 **INT** 11 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 16 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, mace, **Specializations** Crossbow



SIR TOMAS: LORD OF KOVINGTON-KROSS

7th-level human fighter

Sir Tomas Kovington, Lord of Kovington-Kross, rules one of the most strategically important castles in southern Gilda, guarding the frontier with neighboring Darcathia. A seasoned knight and veteran of countless border wars, he has spent his life defending the realm despite the current peace between the Five Kingdoms. Widowed when his wife died giving birth to their only child, Lady Candra, Tomas is a stern but honorable lord who worries his daughter's thirst for battle may one day cost her dearly.

AC 2, **HD** 7 (34hp), **Att** 1 × *longsword +1* (1d10+2), **THACo** 14 (12 with l*ongsword +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 13 **INT** 13 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 10 **CON** 13 **CHA** 11, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, lance, mace, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword

VADAGAR: ROYAL ADVISOR OF ANDROLIA

6th-level gnome sorcerer

Vadagar has been the advisor of the royal court of Androlia for over 100 years, and has served the dynasty well. He is concerned about the growing prejudice toward the wild fey of the isle and fears another war. He is good friends with Harien the Wise.

AC 10, **HD** 6 (14hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THAC0** 17, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 8 **INT** 16 **WIS** 16 **DEX** 10 **CON** 9 **CHA** 14, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *potion of clairvoyance, potion of clairaudience*, **Spells** *astrological prediction, animate blood, ground rot, not this hour, horoscope, Evard's black tentacles*

HARIEN THE WISE

14th-level human magic-user

It is rumored that this old, wandering wizard hasbeen on this isle since the days of the fey children, which would make him older than memory. No one knows for sure, but what is known is that he seems to have a relationship with the fey of the isle, and even the elves of Vala Aedain respect him and his counsel.

AC 7, **HD** 14 (31hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4-1), **THAC0** 14 (15 with staff), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D5 W6 P5 B8 S6, **STR** 7 **INT** 16 **WIS** 18 **DEX** 17 **CON** 10 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *ring of protection, ring of spell turning* (7 charges)*, staff of power* (18 charges), **Spells** *read magic, read languages, charm person, protection from evil, magic missile, locate object, detect invisible, knock, continual light, invisibility, fireball, clairvoyance, protection from normal missiles, invisibility 10' radius, dimension door, massmorph, growth of plants, confusion, cloudkill, hold monster, teleport, move earth, stone to flesh*

EDRIC ROWAN

4th-level human magic-user

Edric Rowan is the sole apprentice of the enigmatic wizard Harien the Wise, a distinction that has earned him equal measures of respect and curiosity throughout Keln. Edric has wandered the isle for years beside his master, learning forgotten lore, ancient magic, and the secret ways of the fey. Patient and humble, he possesses wisdom beyond his years, yet many wonder whether anyone could truly inherit the legacy of a man older than memory itself.

AC 10, **HD** 4 (11hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 14, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D5 W6 P7 B7 S9, **STR** 10 **INT** 14 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 9 **CON** 11 **CHA** 10, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Spells** *floating disc, detect magic, continual light*

SKAYTHAX

10th-level human fighter

Skaythax is a human warrior whose journey began in chains beneath the cruel rule of Nethia, where he was forced into slavery before eventually earning his freedom through courage and determination. Hardened by years of suffering, he carries both the scars and resilience of his past. After escaping, he joined the adventurers Ella and Esha, becoming their trusted companion and steadfast protector. Though he seeks no glory, his deeds have made him a hero among those who value freedom. Skaythax's magical scimatar gives him an extra attack against any opponent he has a higher initiative than.

AC 7, **HD** 10 (44hp), **Att** 1 × *scimitar +2* (1d6+3), **THACo** 12 (9 with *scimitar +2*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B5 S8, **STR** 12 **INT** 7 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 13 **CON** 13 **CHA** 10, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short bow, short sword, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Sword

HIGH PRIESTESS LYRIANA

5th-level human cleric

High Priestess Lyriana serves as the beloved matriarch of the Grand Temple of Ashanna in Gilda, where music, poetry, painting, and dance are celebrated as sacred acts of worship. Gifted with both a magnificent singing voice and a compassionate heart, she has devoted her life to nurturing artists from every walk of life. Lyriana believes beauty possesses the power to heal wounded souls, and her temple has become a sanctuary for musicians, playwrights, sculptors, and dreamers throughout Keln.

AC 9, **HD** 5 (23hp), **Att** 1 × mace (1d6), **THACo** 14, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P9 B11 S9, **STR** 9 **INT** 9 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 15 **CON** 15 **CHA** 15, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, mace, staff, war hammer, **Spells** *purify food and water, cure light wounds, protectio from evil, hold person, speak with animal*

NECROSOLUS

lich

Necrosolus is an ancient sorcerer whose origins trace back to the lost Age of Cymra, where he was counted among the greatest mages of his era. Refusing to surrender to mortality, he embraced the forbidden arts of necromancy, prolonging his existence through unspeakable rituals and dark magic. From hidden sanctums, he commands a fanatical cult devoted to his immortality and grand designs, gathering forgotten relics and forbidden knowledge in pursuit of power over life and death itself. For stats use lich.

MALTHAZAR VENN

beholder

Malthazar Venn is one of Darcathia's wealthiest merchant magnates, renowned for his vast trading empire, impeccable manners, and uncanny ability to predict political and economic upheavals before they occur. In truth, "Malthazar" is an ancient beholder who conceals his true form through powerful magic, manipulating kingdoms, guilds, and noble houses from behind a flawless human disguise. Patient and calculating, he values influence above conquest, believing gold, secrets, and debt can accomplish what armies never could.

For stats use eye of terror.

PIPWICK BRAMBLEGEAR

6th-level gnome thief

Pipwick Bramblegear is a legendary gnome burglar whose exploits have embarrassed nobles, merchants, and even the royal treasury of Essergorn. Equal parts prankster and master thief, he delights in stealing the seemingly impossible, often leaving behind a carved wooden gear as his signature. Though wanted across much of Keln, Pipwick avoids needless violence, relying instead on ingenious gadgets, impossible escapes, and an almost supernatural talent for vanishing before the guards realize he was ever there.

AC 7, **HD** 6 (25hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6), **THACo** 17, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D10 W11 P9 B12 S11, **STR** 11 **INT** 10 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 14 **CON** 13 **CHA** 16, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short bow, short sword, **Abilities** Open Locks 40%, Find/Remove Traps 35%, Pick Pockets 45%, Move Silently 45%, Climb Sheer Walls 92%, Hide in Shadows 35%, Hear Noise (1d6) 1-3 (1d6)

THORUUN MANYHORNS

Thoruun Manyhorns is among the few trolvek who regularly leave the northern forests, serving as an informal emissary between his people and the kingdoms of Keln. A gifted wizard with an insatiable appetite for knowledge, he spends much of his time studying in the libraries and temples of the great cities, where his impeccable manners, refined speech, and elegant cloaks often surprise those expecting a savage giant. Though he embraces civilization, Thoruun never forgets he speaks on behalf of the ancient forests and the patient people who call them home.

For stats use troll with a Neutral alignment, and can cast spells as a 5th-level magic-user.

THE TRIUNE

Blackholm, Darkhan, and Gravemor are the dreaded Demon Knights of Necrosolus, each a fallen champion who long ago pledged body and soul to the ancient lich. Clad in blackened armor etched with profane runes, they command undead legions, lead the cult's most ruthless campaigns, and serve as their master's executioners and generals. Feared across the Middle Sea, they are said to possess neither mercy nor ambition beyond fulfilling Necrosolus's will, and wherever the three ride together, kingdoms whisper that death itself follows in their wake.

For stats, use demonic knights.

Gravemor, Blackholm, Darkhan

KAIRON: PRINCE OF THE CENTAURS

Deep within the wilderness of Wessergorn lies the kingdom of the centaurs. Kairon, their leader, has long kept the peace between his people and the humans of Keln, but with the growing oppression against feychildren, he doesn't know if peace will last much longer. For stats use centaur.

SERENA WOLFSBANE

Serena Wolfsbane is the ruthless alpha of a rival werewolf pack that prowls the dark forests of western Darcathia. Unlike Lord Valerian, who hides behind titles and noble privilege, Serena embraces the savage laws of the hunt, believing only the strongest deserve to lead. She has begun encroaching upon Valerian's territory, stealing followers and disrupting his bloody rituals. As tensions rise, many believe it is only a matter of time before the two alphas meet in a battle that will decide which pack rules the night. For stats use werewolf leader.

HAGATHAR THE MAD

9th-level human sorcerer

Hagathar the Mad was once a brilliant human sorcerer whose mastery of portal magic drove him to attempt the impossible—to gaze beyond the planes into the Outer Dark itself. Whatever he beheld shattered his mind. In unspeakable terror, he clawed his own face bloody and tore out his own eyes, praying never to witness such horrors again. Yet the experience did not turn him away; it consumed him. Blind but guided by visions no mortal should possess, Hagathar now wanders the world as a fanatical prophet of the Horrors, preaching that the impossible things beyond the stars are the universe's only true masters.

AC 9, **HD** 9 (20hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4-1), **THACo** 17 (18 with staff), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 7 **INT** 15 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 15 **CON** 12 **CHA** 13, **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Spells** *breathe, animate blood, snuff the blinding flame, not this hour, alter dreams, psychometry, animal ally, life drain, weapon curse, crawlers of the mouth, life feast, awful rite of the werebeast*

ASTRID FROSTBORN

5th-level human fighter

Astrid Frostborn is a hardened mercenary from the icy lands of the Nordvanir, where long winters and endless clan feuds forged her into a formidable warrior. She has sold her sword across every corner of the **Middle Sea**, earning a reputation for courage, discipline, and unwavering professionalism. Though gold determines her employer, Astrid refuses contracts that prey upon the innocent, believing a warrior's honor is worth more than any king's ransom.

AC 3, **HD** 5 (18hp), **Att** 1 × bastard sword (1d8, or 2d4 two handed), **THACo** 17 (16 with bastard sword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 13 **INT** 11 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 15 **CON** 14 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Battle axe, spear, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword, **Possessions** *armband of protection* (as *ring of protection*)

VERMITHRAX

Vermithrax is an ancient red dragon whose shadow has haunted the Kingdom of Essergorn for centuries. From his volcanic lair high among the crags, he has reduced villages to ash, demanded tribute from terrified lords, and slain countless knights, dragonslayers, and would-be heroes who sought his head. Arrogant beyond measure and possessed of terrifying cunning, Vermithrax delights in breaking the spirits of those who challenge him before delivering the killing blow. Throughout Keln, his name has become synonymous with impossible odds, and few believe any mortal will ever end his reign of fire. For stats use red dragon.

The below NPCs are all part of the same mercenary group that often works for the Triune:

DREX

6th-level human fighter

Drex is a fearsome evil warrior renowned for his immense strength and mastery the sword. Clad in armor fitted with razor-sharp plates, he is especially deadly in close combat, where few foes can withstand his brutal ferocity. A servant of darkness and a formidable champion of evil, his raw power makes him one of the most dangerous enemies adventurers can face.

AC 4, **HD** 6 (39hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +1* (1d8+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with *broadsword +1*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 15 **INT** 9 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 14 **CON** 11 **CHA** 10, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *broadsword +1, leather armor +1*

GRIMSWORD

7th-level human chaos knight

Grimsword is a ruthless evil knight whose lust for power eclipses all loyalty or honor. A master of arms clad in enchanted black armor, he dreams of conquering the realm and ruling through fear and strength alone. Though he surrounds himself with wicked allies and monstrous servants, Grimsword trusts no one, readily betraying even his closest followers whenever ambition demands it. His skill in battle is matched only by his treachery.

AC 0, **HD** 6 (21hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +1* (1d6+2), **THACo** 14 (12 with flail), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 13 **CON** 12 **CHA** 7, **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, flail, lance, short sword, sword, **Specializations** Flail, Abilities, Special **Abilities**

INFERNAL STEED

AC 5[14], 5+5 HD, Move 180'(60')
Commanding the undead: from 3rd level (like turn undead but commands instead of turns; commanded undead obey for 1 round per level; see commanding table)
Life drain: 1/day, make a life-draining melee attack; if hit, target loses 2 HP per chaos knight level (in addition to normal damage); chaos knight healed by amount drained
Unholy resistance: immune to all disease

KELEK

7th-level human chaos knight

Kelek is a cunning and immensely powerful magician whose insatiable lust for power has made him one of the most feared wizards in the realm. Once an ally of the wizard Harien the Wise, he was corrupted by the mystical Heartstone, which magnified the darkness already within his soul. Now he schemes relentlessly to dominate his rivals, surrounding himself with servants he intends to betray the moment they have outlived their usefulness.

AC 9, **HD** 7 (33hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P9 B12 S10, **STR** 15 **INT** 15 **WIS** 13 **DEX** 10 **CON** 14 **CHA** 7, **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sword, **Possessions** *dagger +1, wand of cold* (5 charges), *staff of striking* (12 charges), *ring of protection* **Spells** *charm person, magic missile, read magic, shield, sleep, ESP, knock, mirror image, web, fire ball, fly, haste, charm monsters*

SKYLLA

7th-level human necromancer

Skylla is a formidable evil necromancer whose relentless ambition led her down the path of forbidden magic. Once a promising student of the wizard Harien the Wise, she was corrupted by the mystical Heartstone, awakening an insatiable hunger for power. Surrounding herself with enchanted rings, amulets, staves, and other potent relics, Skylla wields arcane magic with devastating skill. She views compassion as weakness and believes true mastery can only be attained through ruthless determination and the pursuit of absolute magical power.

AC 9, **HD** 7 (22hp), **Att** 1 × *dagger +1* (1d4+1), **THACo** 19 (18 with *dagger +1*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D11 W12 P11 B14 S12, **STR** 9 **INT** 12 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 10 **CHA** 11, **ML** 6, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *ring of protection, wand of lightning bolts* (11 charges), *dagger +1*, **Spells** *decay, detect undead, silence 15' radius, paralyzing touch, skull trap, hold person*

ZARAK

5th-level goblin assassin

Zarak is a notorious goblin assassin whose mastery of disguise, poison, and stealth has made him one of the most feared killers in the realm. Equally capable of appearing as a harmless traveler or a bold sellsword, he strikes only when success is certain. Motivated by wealth rather than loyalty, Zarak sells his deadly talents to the highest bidder, leaving behind only whispers, unanswered murders, and employers who soon learn that an assassin's allegiance lasts only as long as the coin.

AC 6, **HD** 5 (27hp), **Att** 1 × *dagger +1* (1d4+1), **THACo** 17 (16 with *dagger +1*), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P11 B14 S13, **STR** 12 **INT** 10 **WIS** 6 **DEX** 15 **CON** 16 **CHA** 7, **ML** 6, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short bow, short sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *throwing dagger +1* (with magical boomerang returning ability), **Abilities** Open Locks 35%, Find/Remove Traps 30%, Pick Pockets 40%, Move Silently 40%, Climb Sheer Walls 91%, Hide in Shadows 30% Hear Noise (1d6) 1-3 (1d6), Assassination: +4 to hit unaware humanoid from behind; victim saves vs death at level-based penalty or dies instantly, Disguise: 2% detection chance, +2% per change (class/race/sex); height up to 3in shorter or 5in taller, Poison: victims of assassin poisoning suffer -2 to save, Hirelings: levels 1-3 may not hire retainers/mercs/specialists; level 4+ can hire assassins; level 8+ thieves; level 12+ any

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ZARGASH

7th-level human cleric

Zargash is a sinister cleric and master manipulator whose silver tongue has lured countless souls into darkness. Though devoted to foul powers and a trusted lieutenant of Kelek, he secretly covets the abilities of true wizards, believing himself destined for greater magical mastery. Patient, calculating, and relentlessly ambitious, Zargash serves evil only so long as it advances his own designs, dreaming of the day he no longer advises tyrants—but becomes one himself.

AC 8, **HD** 7 (31hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4-1), **THACo** 14 (15 with staff), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D3 W5 P7 B8 S7, **STR** 8 **INT** 10 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 10 **CON** 10 **CHA** 16, **ML** 6, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, mace, staff, war hammer, **Possessions** *staff of snakes, battle axe of dancing* (1 attack per turn against an opponent up to 30' away for 1d8 damage), **Spells** *purify food and water, cause light wounds, cause fear, know alignment, silence 15' radius, resist fire, continual light, cause disease*

ZORGAR

5th-level human barbarian

Zorgar is a savage barbarian who was raised as a slave in the Land of the Thanes, and whose immense strength and utter fearlessness have made him one of the most terrifying warriors in the wilderness. More beast than civilized man, he charges headlong into battle with club, dagger, or his bare hands, relying upon brute force and relentless ferocity to overwhelm his foes. Caring little for kingdoms, wealth, or loyalty, Zorgar fights only to survive, destroying anyone reckless enough to stand in his path.

AC 3, **HD** 5 (23hp), **Att** 1 × club (1d6+3), **THACo** 17 (14 with club), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W11 P10 B13 S13, **STR** 18 **INT** 10 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 13 **CON** 16 **CHA** 12, **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, dagger, mace, staff, war hammer, **Possessions** *dagger +1*, **Abilities** Agile Fighting: +1 AC at level 4, Cure Poison: in wilderness, gather herbs to concoct antidote to natural poisons (1 turn per subject; subject gets second save vs poison), Fear of Magic: refuses arcane magic/items; accepts tribal divine magic, Foraging and Hunting: party forages with 2-in-6 chance, finds prey hunting with 5-in-6 chance, Strike Invulnerable Monsters: from level 4, can hit monsters normally only harmed by magic

WARDUKE

8th-level human fighter

Warduke is a legendary black knight whose name has become synonymous with cruelty and betrayal. Once a noble warrior and close companion of the paladin Strongheart, he was corrupted by the mystical Heartstone, which awakened the darkness within his soul. Clad in fearsome armor and wielding the enchanted sword *Nightwind,* Warduke now sells his unmatched skill to the highest bidder as a mercenary, bounty hunter, and assassin. Heartless, relentless, and driven by ambition, he has become one of the most feared champions of evil in the world.

AC 2, **HD** 8 (41hp), **Att** 1 × *broadsword +1, flaming* (1d8+4), **THAC0** 14 (10 with *broadsword +1, flaming*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 16 **INT** 9 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 11 **CON** 14 **CHA** 11, **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *broadsword +1 (flaming), magical helm* (darkvision 60', causes wearer's eyes to glow red)

UNITS

YEOMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

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SWORDSMEN (MEN-AT-ARMS)
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (broadsword)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

CROSSBOWMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (longbow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Longbowmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Crossbow vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +4
Crossbow vs. Light Foot: +3
Crossbow vs. Medium Foot: +2
Crossbow vs. Heavy Foot: +1

BOWMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d8 (longbow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Longbowmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Longbow vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +4
Longbow vs. Light Foot: +3
Longbow vs. Medium Foot: +2
Longbow vs. Heavy Foot: +1

KNIGHT
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 3
TOTAL HD: 500
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (lance)
QUALITY: Elite
FOOT TYPE: Mounted (Heavy Medium)
CATEGORY: Impact
ABILITIES: Lancers
POA: +3
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Impact Charge (2+ spaces): +4 PoA
Impact Charge w/ Lances: +8 PoA

SHIRELAND

Capital: None
Demographics: 90% halfling, 7% gnome, 1% human, 2% other
Notable Settlements: None
Population: 450,000 people (90,000 families)
Government: Independent Shires ruled by councils headed by an elected Mayor
Rulers: No single ruler
Annual Treasury: Varies by Shire
Expenses: Varies by Shire
Common Trade Goods: Cereals, fruit, grain, pipe weed, textile goods, wine
Demand Values: Apples -2, grain +1, livestock -1, lumber -2, pepper +2, pipe weed -1, wine +1, wool -2

Beasts of Peril: Boars, centaurs, cockatrices, dire wolves, dragons, dryads, fairies, goblinkind, hags, kobolds, leprechauns, merfolk, ogres, pseudodragons, trolls, unicorns, will o' wisps

Shireland is the homeland of the halflings, a peaceful island of rolling green hills, fertile farmland, ancient hedgerows, and countless quiet hamlets where life moves at a slower pace than anywhere else in the **Middle Sea**. Travelers often dismiss the Shirelands as quaint or insignificant, believing them to be little more than sleepy farming communities inhabited by simple folk. Such visitors inevitably discover that beneath the halflings' warm hospitality lies a remarkably organized, prosperous, and fiercely independent society.

Unlike the great kingdoms of men, where power is concentrated in kings and nobles, or the empires of the south with their vast bureaucracies, the halflings govern themselves through countless local communities whose traditions stretch back farther than written memory. The people measure wealth not by conquest or titles, but by healthy harvests, full pantries, thriving families, and the respect of one's neighbors.

The island itself is divided into four great administrative districts known as the North West Farthing, North East Farthing, South West Farthing, and South East Farthing. The South West Farthing also includes the nearby island of Kud Dukan. Though these divisions possess little in the way of political rivalry, they serve as convenient regions for administration, taxation, and local governance.

Each farthing contains three assemblies that meet every spring and autumn. These gatherings are attended by respected householders, village elders, merchants, brewers, millers, and craftsmen who debate local concerns ranging from road repairs and irrigation projects to trade agreements, criminal disputes, and the election of officials. Decisions are almost always reached through lengthy discussion and consensus rather than force of personality. To outsiders, these assemblies can appear painfully slow. To halflings, they represent the highest form of civilized government.

CULTURE

To understand the halflings of Shireland is to understand that they value comfort without laziness, prosperity without greed, and peace without weakness. Nearly every aspect of their society is centered upon family, community, and the quiet satisfaction of honest labor.

Most halflings spend their lives within only a few miles of where they were born. Entire family lines may inhabit the same village for centuries, their histories carefully preserved through oral tradition, family records, and stories told around fireplaces during the long winter evenings. Genealogy is something of a national pastime, and nearly every respectable family can recite its lineage for dozens of generations.

Hospitality is considered sacred. A traveler who arrives at a halfling home is almost always offered food before being asked questions. Refusing hospitality is considered rude; abusing it is considered shameful beyond measure. Guests are expected to behave with courtesy, while hosts are expected to provide generously according to their means.

Halflings possess a remarkable love of celebration. Harvest festivals, weddings, birthdays, planting feasts, brewing competitions, pie contests, seasonal fairs, and market days fill the calendar throughout the year. Music accompanies nearly every public gathering, with fiddles, flutes, whistles, drums, and cheerful singing lasting well into the evening. Dancing is common, particularly after successful harvests.

Although peaceful by nature, halflings possess an exceptionally dry sense of humor and delight in harmless practical jokes. A guest who discovers his boots hidden beneath a hay cart or finds salt replaced with sugar during breakfast has likely earned acceptance rather than insult.

Their homes reflect their values. Most families live in comfortable cottages built into gentle hillsides or constructed of timber and stone. Interiors are warm, immaculately maintained, and surprisingly spacious despite modest exteriors. Fireplaces burn throughout the colder months, while polished wooden furniture, embroidered linens, and overflowing bookshelves create homes that seem lived in rather than displayed.

Gardens are everywhere. Flowers grow beside vegetables, fruit trees surround nearly every home, and carefully tended orchards stretch across entire valleys. Even the poorest halfling household takes immense pride in maintaining an attractive garden.

ECONOMY

The Shirelands possess one of the strongest agricultural economies anywhere in the **Middle Sea.** Its fertile fields produce enormous

quantities of wheat, barley, oats, vegetables, apples, berries, cheeses, butter, honey, pipeweed, preserves, smoked meats, and especially ale. Halfling breweries are famous throughout the civilized world, and many taverns proudly advertise that they serve genuine Shireland ale.

Their farmers are extraordinarily productive, employing generations of accumulated knowledge regarding crop rotation, irrigation, and soil management. Nothing is wasted. Even seemingly insignificant scraps find some practical purpose.

Beyond agriculture, the island exports fine wool, leather goods, pottery, furniture, smoked fish, fruit wines, preserves, embroidered clothing, carved pipes, baskets, herbal medicines, and exceptionally crafted cooking utensils. Their blacksmiths rarely produce weapons of war, preferring to forge agricultural tools renowned for their quality.

Trade flourishes despite the island's peaceful reputation. Merchants from Wessergorn, Keln, Karth, Thessadonia, and beyond regularly visit the island seeking foodstuffs impossible to match elsewhere.

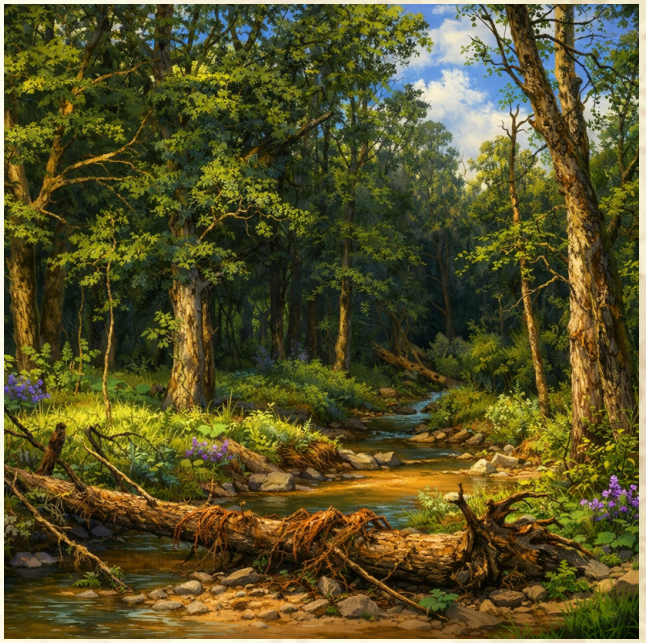
Unlike many other cultures, few halflings aspire toward great fortunes. Prosperity is admired only so long as it benefits one's family and neighbors. Excessive displays of wealth are quietly frowned upon.

LAW AND ORDER

Crime within Shireland is astonishingly rare. Each farthing elects sheriffs during the seasonal assemblies. Far removed from the heavily armored watchmen found elsewhere in the **Middle Sea**, sheriffs are practical community leaders trusted by their neighbors rather than feared.

They command small bands of rangers responsible for patrolling roads, protecting farms from wolves and other dangerous beasts, recovering stolen livestock, searching for missing children or travelers, maintaining forest trails, and discreetly observing strangers entering the island.

The rangers know nearly every path, stream, and woodland on the island. Few outsiders realize how closely they are being watched until they have already reached their destination.



Punishments emphasize restitution rather than cruelty. Thieves compensate their victims through labor or repayment. Public apologies are often considered more humiliating than imprisonment. Serious violence remains exceptionally uncommon, making murder one of the rarest crimes imaginable.

One law, however, is enforced with absolute conviction. Slavery is illegal throughout Shireland. No slave may legally be owned upon halfling soil. Any runaway slave who reaches the island is granted immediate asylum regardless

of origin, nationality, or race. Attempts by foreign powers to reclaim escaped slaves have repeatedly been refused by the assemblies, even at considerable diplomatic cost. This principle is considered inseparable from halfling identity, and every sheriff and ranger is expected to defend it.

OUTSIDERS

Visitors are generally welcomed warmly, though seldom without curiosity. Foreign merchants quickly discover that nearly every villager wishes to know where they have traveled, what distant kingdoms are like, whether dragons truly exist, and whether southern spices really are worth their incredible prices.

While hospitality is abundant, outsiders are quietly observed. Rangers, innkeepers, and village elders exchange information with surprising efficiency, ensuring suspicious individuals rarely move unnoticed.

Most travelers find excellent accommodations at village inns. Halfling inns are famous for clean rooms, feather mattresses, generous meals, and astonishing breakfasts. A traveler expecting only bread and stew is likely to be served fresh eggs, sausages, mushrooms, roasted potatoes, warm bread, preserves, fruit, cheese, and several mugs of excellent ale before beginning the day's journey.

Violence inside an inn is nearly unheard of. Anyone foolish enough to start a fight soon discovers that an entire village can become remarkably united when defending one of its own.

NENNIUS

Nennius stands alone among the settlements of Shireland. Officially a possession of the Kingdom of Wessergorn in Keln, it serves as the island's only true port city and primary gateway to the outside world. Unlike the quiet villages inland, Nennius bustles with sailors, merchants, shipwrights, dockworkers, moneylenders, caravan masters, and adventurers arriving from every corner of the **Middle Sea**.

Its daily market is among the finest on the western sea, where exotic silks from Nethia, spices from distant kingdoms, dwarven steel, Karthan wine, Nordvanir furs, and Shireland produce all change hands beneath colorful awnings.

The city's governor is Aina, a respected female gnome whose practical leadership has made Nennius one of the safest and most prosperous ports in the region. Under her guidance, customs duties are fair, corruption is swiftly punished, and disputes between foreign merchants are resolved with remarkable efficiency.

Ships entering harbor are assigned berths by the harbor master according to size, cargo, and tide. Fees are collected before unloading begins, manifests are inspected, and customs officials examine unusual cargoes. Harbor guards patrol the docks continuously, while bonded warehouses allow merchants to store valuable goods safely until they are sold.

Despite its cosmopolitan nature, Nennius never quite loses its halfling character. Excellent bakeries line the streets, flowers bloom from nearly every window, and visitors often remark that even the busiest marketplace somehow feels welcoming.

PANTHEON

The halflings worship Shalla, the Smiling Mother, goddess of meadows, hearth, harvest, family, and simple joys. She is their sole deity, and the people see little need for others.

Her shrines are humble places surrounded by flowers, fruit trees, and gardens rather than towering temples. Priests serve primarily as teachers, healers, mediators, and caretakers of the poor instead of political authorities.

The teachings of Shalla emphasize generosity, honest work, kindness toward strangers, forgiveness, and gratitude for life's simple blessings. To most halflings, tending one's garden faithfully honors Shalla as surely as any prayer.

NPCS

POSY BRAMBLEFOOT

5th-level halfling druid

Posy Bramblefoot is a wandering halfling druid whose quiet wisdom is known throughout the Four Farthings. Carrying little more than her walking staff and an overstuffed satchel of herbs and curiosities, she travels from village to village offering magical aid, settling disputes, identifying strange relics, and sharing hard-earned knowledge. Though humble and soft-spoken, Posy possesses formidable nature power, and many believe there is no greater authority on magic and nature anywhere in Shireland.

AC 9, **HD** 5 (12hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4-2), **THACo** 17 (19 with staff), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D9 W10 P12 B14 S12, **STR** 5 **INT** 14 **WIS** 14 **DEX** 15 **CON** 12 **CHA** 13, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Club, sling, spear, staff, **Spells** *detect magic, invisibility to animals, cure light wounds, create water, hold animal, protection from lightning,* **Abilities** Energy Resistance: +2 saves vs electricity (lightning) and fire, Identification: identify all plants and animals, discern pure water, Pass Without Trace: from level 3, pass through natural environments leaving no tracks; move through overgrown areas at normal speed, Path-Finding: party has only 1-in-6 chance of getting lost in woodlands

WILLET GOODBARREL

5th-level halfling

Willet Goodbarrel is a halfling who spent nearly a decade beyond Shireland, traveling alongside knights, mercenary companies, and adventuring bands throughout Keln. His songs of great victories earned him lasting fame, but so too did they burden him with memories of battlefields he wishes he could forget. Since returning home, Willet startles at sudden noises, sleeps little, and often stares silently into the fire. Yet when he sings of fallen heroes, few can match the depth of sorrow and hope woven into his voice.

AC 9, **HD** 5 (12hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6-1), **THACo** 17 (18 with short sword), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B7 S8, **STR** 7 **INT** 11 **WIS** 17 **DEX** 11 **CON** 12 **CHA** 11, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, javelin, short sword, sling, **Abilities** Infravision 30', Hear noise 2-in-6, Hide in woods 90% or shadows 2-in-6, Initiative +1, Missile attack +1, +4 saves vs magic, Surprised only 1-in-6

MITSO THE CURIOUS

5th-level halfling thief

Mitso the Curious, also known as Mitso the Mighty (by himself, mostly), is a halfling thief whose fascination with forgotten places and hidden treasures has led him into countless adventures across Shireland and beyond. Unlike many thieves who seek only wealth, Mitso is driven by an insatiable curiosity, collecting lost maps, ancient trinkets, and strange artifacts simply to uncover their stories. His nimble fingers and clever mind have earned him a reputation as a master of infiltration, though his greatest weakness remains his inability to resist a mystery.

AC 5, **HD** 5 (16hp), **Att** 1 × short sword (1d6), **THACo** 17, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D4 W5 P6 B7 S8, **STR** 10 **INT** 10 **WIS** 9 **DEX** 18 **CON** 13 **CHA** 13, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short sword, sling, **Abilities** Open Locks 35%, Find/Remove Traps 30%, Pick Pockets 40%, Move Silently 40%, Climb Sheer Walls 91%, Hide in Shadows 30%, Hear Noise (1d6) 1-3 (1d6), Backstab (surprise: x2 damage scaling), Read languages

UNITS

The Shirelands maintain no standing army, believing permanent militaries invite wars that peaceful nations would otherwise avoid.

Yet this tranquility should never be mistaken for helplessness.

In times of crisis, the four farthings can collectively muster nearly 90,000 determined fighters. Most are hunters, farmers, foresters, and rangers accustomed to the island's hills and woodlands. While they lack the discipline of professional soldiers, they excel at ambushes, skirmishing, scouting, and defending difficult terrain.

An invading army expecting an effortless conquest would quickly discover that every hedgerow conceals archers, every bridge is watched, every road known, and every village prepared to resist.

The halflings do not seek war. But neither do they surrender their home.

HALFLING SLINGS
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (sling)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Ranged vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +2
Ranged vs. Light Foot: +1

HALFLING FOOT
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d4 (sling)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Medium Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Swordsmen
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Swordsmen vs. Pikemen/Off. Spear: +2

THE PRINCIPALITY OF ARLENCE

Capital: Arlence
Demographics: 75% human, 10% dwarf, 5% high elf, 5% halfling, 3% gnome, 2% other
Notable Settlements: Arlence (20,000 families; Market Value II)
Population: 200,000 (40,000 families)
Government: Principality under the auspices of Essergorn
Rulers: Prince Owayne II
Annual Treasury: 33,000 pp (roughly 12,000 pp in the royal treasury
Expenses: 28,000 pp
Common Trade Goods: Fish, iron, lead, salt, jewelry, glassware, weaponry, pottery, livestock, agriculture, fine cloth
Demand Values: Grain +1, livestock -1, lumber -1, slaves -1, wine +1, wool +2

Beasts of Peril: Basilisk, boars, cockatrices, dire wolves, dragons, dryads, fairies, giant boars, giant stags, merfolk, werewolves, wraiths

Among the Five Kingdoms of Keln, the Principality of Arlence occupies a unique position. It is neither a true kingdom nor a simple province, standing instead as an independent state bound by treaty, tradition, and shared history to the crown of Essergorn. Located among the Eastern Isles, Arlence has developed a culture distinct from the mainland kingdoms, shaped by its isolation, its maritime heritage, and the ambitions of the powerful families who rule from its courts.

To outsiders, Arlence is a land of elegant manners, wealthy merchants, refined artistry, and dangerous politics. Beneath the beautiful architecture and sophisticated society, however, lies a nation built upon rebellion, compromise, and the careful balancing of power.

THE FOUNDING OF ARLENCE

For much of its history, the Eastern Isles were territories controlled by the Kingdom of Essergorn. Though distant from the main island of Keln, the isles were valuable possessions, providing access to important sea routes and serving as a source of agricultural goods, wool, and maritime trade.

Over time, however, resentment grew among the island's most powerful magnates. They believed the distant kings of Essergorn cared little for their concerns while demanding taxes and loyalty from their lands. The most influential among these nobles was Count Engona, a wealthy and ambitious lord who controlled vast estates and commanded the loyalty of many lesser magnates.

One hundred years ago, Count Engona gathered the great families of the Eastern Isles beneath his banner and declared independence

from Essergorn. The rebellion was swift and initially successful, with several island fortresses falling under rebel control. Yet the crown responded with overwhelming force, sending armies across the sea to restore order.

The rebellion was crushed. Count Engona was captured and executed, and many of the rebel nobles were stripped of their lands and titles. However, the war proved more costly than the king had anticipated. Maintaining a permanent military presence on the distant islands required enormous resources, and the crown recognized that continued occupation would drain Essergorn's treasury for generations.

Rather than continue an expensive campaign of control, the king offered a compromise.

The Treaty of Arlence was signed, granting the Eastern Isles independence while maintaining their relationship as a client state of Essergorn. Arlence would govern itself, but it would continue paying a modest yearly tribute to the crown and provide military assistance should Essergorn ever require it.

The final condition of the treaty was perhaps the most important: Arlence could never become a kingdom.

Its ruler would not hold a seat upon the Council of Kings and would never possess the same authority as the monarchs of Keln. Instead, the ruler of Arlence would bear three titles: Count of Arlence, Prince of Arlence, and Marquis of the Eastern Isles.

Thus, the Principality of Arlence was born.

THE CULTURE OF ARLENCE

A century of independence has transformed Arlence into something distinct from the mainland kingdoms. While the people of Keln traditionally embrace the ideals of knighthood, feudal warfare, and noble cavalry, Arlence has become a nation of sailors, merchants, artisans, and professional soldiers.

The sea dominates Arlencian identity. Nearly every noble family owns ships, maintains maritime interests, or traces its wealth to trade. Young aristocrats often learn navigation and sailing alongside swordsmanship, and many noble houses maintain private vessels as symbols of status.

The rapier has replaced the longsword and greatsword as the favored weapon of the aristocracy. Elegant, precise, and deadly, the rapier reflects the values of Arlencian nobility: intelligence over brute strength, skill over force, and reputation over simple victory.

An Arlencian noble is expected to be as skilled in conversation as combat. A poorly chosen insult at court may be just as dangerous as a sword drawn in anger.

GOVERNMENT AND NOBILITY

The Prince of Arlence rules from the capital city of Arlence, but much of the nation's true power rests among the great magnate families.

These families control estates, trade houses, shipping fleets, textile workshops, and financial institutions. Unlike the traditional feudal nobles of mainland Keln, Arlencian nobles are often as much merchants and financiers as they are landowners.

Political influence is earned through wealth, reputation, military service, and patronage. A family that funds a magnificent cathedral, commissions a masterpiece of sculpture, or sponsors a brilliant playwright may

gain more influence than one that simply owns more land.

This competition has created a remarkably sophisticated and artistic society.

MILITARY TRADITION

Unlike the kingdoms of mainland Keln, Arlence maintains no order of knights.

The island's nobles believe professional soldiers are more reliable than feudal levies, and the defense of the principality rests upon a permanent standing army of highly trained pikemen and crossbowmen.

These soldiers are stationed throughout the Eastern Isles, protecting strategic locations, guarding ports, and ensuring that the principality can defend itself without relying upon outside assistance.

Arlencian infantry formations are among the most disciplined in Keln. Their pikemen are trained to hold defensive positions against cavalry charges, while their crossbowmen are renowned for their accuracy and patience.

The result is a military force that lacks the romantic traditions of knightly warfare but possesses exceptional practical effectiveness.

TRADE AND WEALTH

Much of Arlence's prosperity comes from textiles.

The wool trade begins in the kingdoms of mainland Keln, where raw wool is harvested and transported across the sea to Arlencian workshops. There, skilled craftsmen clean, card, spin, dye, and weave the wool into cloth of exceptional quality.

Arlencian textiles are considered among the finest in the Middle Sea. Their fabrics are prized by nobles, merchants, and wealthy households throughout distant lands, where they command premium prices.

The wealth generated by this industry has transformed Arlence into a center of commerce and refinement.

SEA FOLK

The coastal communities of Arlence maintain a long-standing relationship with the peoples of the sea. Tritons, merfolk, and other ocean-dwelling folk are not uncommon visitors to its shores, often emerging from the depths to trade rare pearls, exotic shells, enchanted coral, unusual sea creatures, and treasures recovered from sunken ruins. In exchange, they seek fine textiles, crafted goods, metalwork, and surface-world luxuries unavailable beneath the waves.

These meetings are treated as ordinary commerce by coastal villagers, though many inland nobles still view such encounters with fascination and curiosity.

HOUSE VEDICI

Arlence is also home to one of the wealthiest financial institutions in the **Middle Sea**: the gnomish banking house of House Vedici.

The Vedici family arrived in Arlence a few generations after the fall of Byrisia, bringing with them centuries of financial knowledge, trade connections, and accumulated wealth. Their arrival changed the economic landscape of the principality forever.

The current head of the house, Enzo Vedici, is a brilliant and patient financier who has increased the wealth and influence of his family by nearly half over the past five decades.

House Vedici finances much of Arlence's standing military through low-interest loans, allowing the principality to maintain its professional forces without crippling taxation.

Enzo understands that Arlence will likely never repay these debts in the traditional sense. But gnomes measure time differently than humans do.

To Enzo Vedici, the loans are opportunities. He believes Arlence possesses tremendous potential, and he intends for House Vedici to be there when that potential is realized.

Whether that means prosperity, political influence, or something far more ambitious remains unknown.

PATRONAGE AND THE ARTS

No place in Keln rivals Arlence in artistic patronage.

The great families of the principality constantly compete to demonstrate their wealth and sophistication through magnificent works of art. Noble houses commission enormous statues, breathtaking paintings, grand architectural projects, and works of literature intended to immortalize their names. This competition has transformed Arlence into a haven for artists.

Every year, hundreds of painters, musicians, sculptors, architects, poets, and writers arrive from across the Middle Sea seeking a wealthy patron willing to fund their ambitions.

For some, Arlence offers fame and fortune. For others, it offers only another court filled with dangerous rivalries and expectations. An artist who gains the favor of a powerful noble family may live in luxury for years. One who loses that favor may find themselves quickly forgotten.

DUELS AND HONOR

Few traditions define Arlence more than the duel. Among the aristocracy, matters of honor are taken extremely seriously. An insult, accusation, or slight against one's reputation may lead to a formal challenge.

Most duels are fought to first blood, allowing rivals to settle disputes without unnecessary deaths. However, in cases involving severe dishonor, betrayal, or accusations of cowardice, duels to the death are permitted.

Arlencian law recognizes these duels as legitimate when properly witnessed and conducted according to tradition.

A duelist may bring three weapons into combat. Among the nobility, the most common combination is the rapier, cloak, and dagger.

The rapier is the primary weapon, while the dagger serves as a backup. The cloak is not merely decorative; skilled duelists use it as an off-hand defense, wrapping an opponent's blade, disrupting attacks, or creating openings for a killing strike.

MASTERS-OF-ARMS

Because dueling is such an important part of Arlencian society, skilled weapon instructors are among the most respected individuals in the principality.

Known as Masters-of-Arms, these teachers train nobles, military officers, and wealthy merchants in swordsmanship, etiquette, and the traditions of honorable combat.

The finest Masters-of-Arms command enormous fees and may become influential figures within noble households. Some are former soldiers, others legendary duelists, and a rare few are artists of the blade whose techniques are studied for generations.

RELATIONS WITH VALA AEDAIN

In recent decades, Arlence has developed increasingly close relations with the high elves of Vala Aedain.

Many elves have relocated to the Eastern Isles, attracted by Arlence's wealth, artistic traditions, and openness toward foreign cultures. Some have even risen to the rank of duke, becoming powerful magnates within Arlencian society.

The arrival of these elves has brought new ideas, magical knowledge, and cultural influence to the principality.

However, the growing relationship has alarmed the kings of Keln.

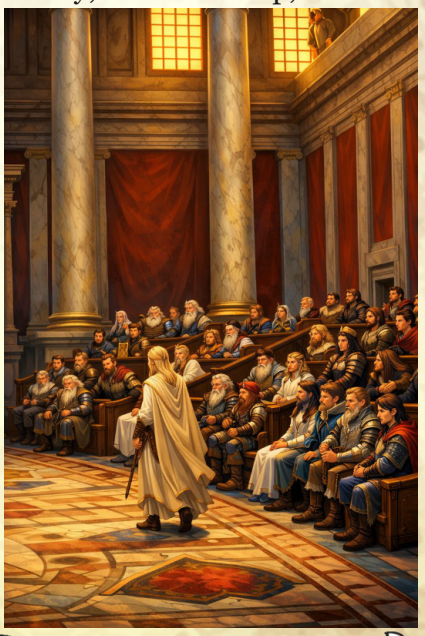
Many fear that Arlence and Vala Aedain may be forming a military alliance that could threaten the balance of power throughout the island. So far, no official action has been taken, and diplomacy remains cordial.

Yet among the courts of Keln, many quietly wonder whether Arlence is becoming something greater than a mere client state.

PANTHEON

The people of Arlence worship the same gods as the other kingdoms of Keln. Their temples honor the traditional pantheon, and priests serve communities throughout the islands.

However, Arlencians tend to place particular emphasis on gods associated with knowledge, beauty, craftsmanship, commerce, and honor.



NPCS

PRINCE OWAYNE II: PRINCE OF ARLENCE

6th-level human fighter

Prince Owayne II inherited the throne of Arlence at the age of 16. Now 21, he has proven himself to be an honorable and skilled leader. However, this has not prevented some of the more ambitious dukes of his realm to plot conspiracies.

AC 1, **HD** 6 (27hp), **Att** 1 × *rapier +3* (1d6+6), **THAC0** 17 (11 with *rapier +3*), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 9 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 16 **CON** 13 **CHA** 13, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *rapier +3*

DUKE SYRUNE OF HOUSE TALAEDRA, LORD OF LONGLEAF MANOR: MAGNATE OF ARLENCE, FRIEND OF THE PRINCE

5th-level elf

Duke Syrune's family immigrated to Arlence nearly a century ago, and have since risen to one of the most influential magnates of the isle. He is good friends with Prince Owayne, and the two have a long-standing competition about which one is the better duelist.

AC 4, **HD** 5 (19hp), **Att** 1 × *rapier +1* (1d6+4), **THAC0** 17 (13 with *rapier +1*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D8 W9 P9 B11 S10, **STR** 11 **INT** 13 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 18 **CON** 12 **CHA** 14, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Possessions** *rapier +1*

LADY SERAPHINE VALCOURT

7th-level human magic-user

Lady Seraphine Valcourt is the Court Magician of Arlence and the Prince's most trusted arcane advisor. Renowned for her mastery of divination and diplomacy as much as her formidable magical power, she counsels the prince on matters ranging from foreign affairs to supernatural threats. Calm, perceptive, and rarely surprised, Seraphine is widely regarded as one of the finest minds in the Eastern Isles. Many credit her wisdom with preserving the Principality through more than one political crisis without a single sword being drawn.

AC 10, **HD** 7 (26hp), **Att** 1 × staff (1d4-1), **THACo** 17 (18 with staff), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P9 B12 S10, **STR** 8 **INT** 15 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 12 **CON** 13 **CHA** 11, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *staff of enemy detection* (as *wand of enemy detection*, 8 charges), **Spells** *hold portal, charm person, detect invisible, ESP, dispel magic, darkvision*

LUCIEN MARREC

7th-level human sorcerer

Lucien Marrec is a brilliant human sorcerer whose rivalry with Lady Seraphine Valcourt is matched only by the passion they once shared. Their romance ended years ago after ambition and irreconcilable philosophies drove them apart, leaving behind equal measures of admiration and resentment. Now an independent scholar of the arcane, Lucien frequently crosses paths with the Court Magician, where every debate becomes a contest of wit and magical theory. Though they outwardly regard one another as rivals, those closest to them suspect neither has ever truly forgotten the other.

AC 7, **HD** 7 (19hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P9 B12 S10, **STR** 12 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 14 **CON** 11 **CHA** 9, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Spells** *wall of fog, animate blood, breathe, psychometry, become swarm, cause blindness or deafness, Tathos's grasping tentacles, crawlers of the mouth*

GASTON BELLAMERE

3rd-level human illusionist

Gaston Bellamere is one of Arlence's most successful merchant princes, dealing in fine textiles, spices, perfumes, and luxury goods throughout the **Middle Sea**. A gifted illusionist as well as a shrewd businessman, he employs harmless enchantments and dazzling illusions to showcase merchandise, entertain wealthy clients, and negotiate unforgettable trade exhibitions. Though some competitors grumble that his magic gives him an unfair advantage, Gaston is careful never to cross the line into fraud, knowing that in Arlence a merchant's reputation is worth far more than any single sale.

AC 10, **HD** 3 (4hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 10 **INT** 15 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 8 **CON** 8 **CHA** 14, **ML** 6, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *wand of fire balls* (9 charges), **Spells** *color spray, light, hypnotic pattern*

FENBINK THE WEAPONSMIHT: GNOME TINKERER

4th-level gnome artificer

Fenbink is a renowned weaponsmith whose weapons and armor are sold throughout all of the **Middle Sea**. He often employs adventurers to fetch obscure and esoteric items for his latest inventions. He's certainly eccentric, but he pays well.

AC 10, **HD** 4 (17hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 19, **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D13 W14 P13 B16 S15, **STR** 11 **INT** 18 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 17 **CON** 14 **CHA** 14, **ML** 7, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, **Gadgets** *memory crystal, acid spray, spring-loaded boots, mechanical wings, night goggles*

Duke Ercole of House Esta, Lord of Red Brook Manor: Magnate of Arlence

6th-level human fighter

Duke Ercole's ambitions are no secret among the courts of Arlence, and his power and prestige are second only to the prince himself. With his eyes set on the throne, Duke Ercole is behind many dark machinations afoot in the Principality.

AC 6, **HD** 6 (19hp), **Att** 1 × saber (1d6+2), **THACo** 19 (17 with saber), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 14 **INT** 15 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 15 **CON** 12 **CHA** 10, **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, spear, sword, **Specializations** Sword

Roland Devereaux

Roland Devereaux is one of Arlence's most influential bankers, overseeing a vast network of loans, letters of credit, and mercantile investments that stretch across the Middle Sea. Calm, meticulous, and nearly impossible to deceive, he has earned the trust of princes, merchants, and noble houses alike. Though he rarely carries a weapon, many quietly claim Roland has shaped the fate of kingdoms with little more than a ledger, a signature, and the careful lending of coin. For stats use normal human.

Lady Isabelle Montclair

Lady Isabelle Montclair was widowed nearly ten years ago when her husband perished during a storm at sea. Rather than remarry, she devoted her inheritance to purchasing merchant vessels, wagering her future upon commerce instead of courtship. The gamble paid off. Today she commands a prosperous trading fleet that sails throughout the **Middle Sea**, dealing in fine textiles, wine, spices, and luxury goods.

Intelligent, independent, and respected even by her rivals, Lady Isabelle has built a commercial empire that rivals the fortunes of many ancient noble houses.

For stats use normal human.

Borin Stonebell

Borin Stonebell is the dwarven proprietor of the Grand Arlencian Theatre, the finest house of performance in the Eastern Isles. A former entertainer himself, Borin now manages a renowned company of bards, actors, acrobats, jugglers, and performers who bring stories from across the **Middle Sea** to life upon his stage. Beneath his cheerful and theatrical reputation, however, Borin maintains a quiet relationship with Arlence's thieves' guild. Several of his most talented acrobats and gymnasts secretly moonlight as burglars, using their remarkable agility and training to assist the guild. In return, Borin enjoys the guild's protection and a discreet network of information that keeps his theater free from trouble.

For stats use dwarf.

VAELOR ZAUVIRR

5th-level drow

Vaelor Zauvirr is a drow master swordsman whose arrival in Arlence nearly twenty years ago forever changed the principality's dueling circles. Wielding a bastard sword with breathtaking speed, he has defeated dozens of renowned duelists without ever suffering a serious wound. Though many nobles remain suspicious of his Underdark heritage, none question his honor, for Vaelor has never broken the strict code governing Arlencian duels. Today, wealthy aristocrats compete fiercely for the privilege of studying under him, while challengers from across the **Middle Sea** travel to Arlence hoping to test their skill against the drow duelist.

AC 2, **HD** 5 (13hp), **Att** 1 × bastard sword (1d8+2, or 2d4+2 two handed), **THACo** 19 (17 with bastard sword), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D10 W11 P11 B13 S10, **STR** 15 **INT** 10 **WIS** 10 **DEX** 17 **CON** 9 **CHA** 17, **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, short sword, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Spells** *detect magic, cure light wounds, warp wood, silence 15' radius, remove curse,* **Abilities** Detect Secret Doors: 2-in-6 when actively searching, Divine Magic: cleric spell list; must carry holy symbol; light(darkness), Immunity to Ghoul Paralysis, Infravision 90', Light Sensitivity: -2 to attack, -1 AC in bright light (daylight or continual light), Listening at Doors: 2-in-6, Spider Affinity: speaks secret language of spiders, +1 reaction rolls with spiders

LADY ELYNDRA AELTHALAS

Lady Elyndra Aelthalas is an influential elven merchant prince whose vast commercial fleet rivals that of Gaston Bellamere. Specializing in fine wines, rare woods, enchanted goods, and exquisite elven craftsmanship from Vala Aedain, she has become one of Arlence's wealthiest and most politically connected figures. Elegant, calculating, and endlessly patient, Elyndra has used her considerable influence at court to persuade the Prince to strengthen diplomatic ties and establish formal trade agreements with the high elves. While her rivalry with Bellamere is conducted through commerce rather than open hostility, their competition has become legendary, with each striving to outmaneuver the other in both the marketplace and the royal court. For stats use merchant.

TABOL THE BLACK FLOWER: RENOWNED MASTER-OF-ARMS

8th-level human fighter/ 3rd-level ranger

Tabol the Black Flower is the most renowned masterof-arms in Arlence. His prices are triple that of the next highest master-of-arms trainer in the city—and well worth the cost. However, Tabol is very picky with his students, and refuses to train those he deems lack the necessary talent. This has made him enemies of more than one powerful magnate of the isle. Of course, this doesn't trouble him in the slightest. Tabol is also known for training some gifted pupils for free.

AC 4, **HD** 11 (35hp), **Att** 1 × *claymore +2* (1d10+4, exploding die), **THACo** 14 (10 with *claymore +2*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10, **STR** 14 **INT** 13 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 15 **CON** 13 **CHA** 14, **ML** 11, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, longbow, short sword, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Two-handed sword, **Possessions** *claymore +2*

CADE HOB: LORD OF ARLENCE'S THIEVES' GUILD

7th-level elf thief

The head of Arlence's thieves' guild, Cade Hob is as ruthless as he is cunning. Despite this, he has a vested interest in the current power structure remaining as it is in Arlence—as chaos and war is bad for business—and is thus a supporter of the current Prince... and will remain so for as long as it suits him.

AC 6, **HD** 7 (24hp), **Att** 1 × dagger (1d4), **THACo** 17, **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D8 W9 P7 B10 S9, **STR** 12 **INT** 13 **WIS** 8 **DEX** 16 **CON** 15 **CHA** 11, **ML** 7, **AL** Neutral, **Weapon Proficiencies** Crossbow, dagger, short bow, short sword **Abilities** Open Locks 45%, Find/Remove Traps 40%, Pick Pockets 50%, Move Silently 50%, Climb Sheer Walls 93%, Hide in Shadows 40% Hear Noise (1d6) 1-3 (1d6)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Backstab (surprise: x2 damage scaling)
Read languages (level 4+)

UNITS

Arlence relies on its pikemen and crossbowmen. The Prince can only pay for roughly 3,000 soldiers out of the city's treasury—the rest is paid for through loans (90,000 pp a year). The Prince makes the minimum payments every month on this loan (which is currently at just over 400k), but long-term hopes of ever paying it off seem unlikely... unless he expands his territory or plunders a neighbor. There are some nobles who suggest Lusatania looks a ripe target... while others think it's time to gain vengeance against Essergorn. A third option is the possibility of joining the Sea King Dallen Yadwrick and turning to privateering of other nations' merchant ships. None of these options sit well with Prince Owayne, however, so only time will tell how he deals with the growing deficit.

PIKEMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Spearmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
See **The Middle Sea Core Rulebook** for Offensive & Defensive Spear POAs

CROSSBOWMEN
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (crossbow)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Non-Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Ranged Attack
POA: +1
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Crossbow vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +4
Crossbow vs. Light Foot: +3
Crossbow vs. Medium Foot: +2
Crossbow vs. Heavy Foot: +1

Vala Aedain

Capital: Everdale
Demographics: 99% high elf, 1% other
Notable Settlements: Everdale (25,000 families; no market)
Population: 5.5 million people (1.1 million families)
Government: Monarchy
Rulers: High Queen *Xitharra Uial i Abonnen* (Xitharra Twilight the Afterborn)
Annual Treasury: na
Expenses: na
Common Trade Goods: na
Demand Values: na

Beasts of Peril: Brownies, centaurs, fairies, faerie dragons, dryads, nymphs, pixies, treants, unicorns

The Kingdom of Vala Aedain is the last surviving realm of the High Elves in the **Middle Sea**, a living remnant of an age when their people ruled vast empires stretching across the known world. While the civilizations of men speak of ancient history through weathered ruins and fading legends, the elves of Vala Aedain remember those ages as living memory. Many among the elder generations personally witnessed the rise and fall of kingdoms that humans now know only through myth.

To outsiders, Vala Aedain appears less like a kingdom than a primeval paradise untouched by time. Ancient forests, some older than civilization itself, blanket the land beneath

impossibly tall trees whose branches form emerald cathedrals overhead. Crystal rivers wind through moss-covered glades where unicorns graze without fear, dryads dwell within living oaks, and pixies, brownies, faerie dragons, centaurs, nymphs, and countless other fey creatures wander openly beneath the stars. Little of the forest has ever known the axe. Even the roads seem grown rather than built, winding naturally among hills and roots as though the forest itself had chosen their course.

At the heart of this timeless realm stands Everdale, the capital of the High Elves. Unlike the great cities of men, Everdale possesses no bustling marketplace, merchant quarter, or crowded docks. It was never built for commerce. Rather, it serves as the ceremonial, political, and spiritual heart of the elven people. Elegant towers of white stone rise among living trees that have been carefully shaped through ancient druidic magic, while graceful bridges span streams and spires climb to the clouds. The city is home to roughly twenty-five thousand elven families, yet it feels astonishingly quiet. There are no shouting merchants, no smoke-blackened workshops, and no clamor of crowded streets. Instead, fountains, birdsong, and music drifting from distant halls provide the city's constant melody.

The elves themselves number nearly two and a half million souls, most spread throughout countless hidden settlements woven into the forests. Most of these communities remain unknown to outsiders, deliberately concealed both by geography and by powerful enchantments. Many human scholars suspect that maps of Vala Aedain are fundamentally unreliable, believing entire villages simply vanish from those not meant to find them.

THE LAST HIGH ELVES

The High Elves regard themselves as the final custodians of an ancient civilization whose glory has otherwise vanished from the **Middle Sea**. While men celebrate kingdoms measured in centuries, the elves think in millennia. Their laws, customs, and traditions have endured for thousands of years with remarkably little change, a testament to the stability afforded by their long lives.

This longevity has also fostered an extraordinary patience. Elven rulers rarely concern themselves with events unfolding over mere years. Instead, they make decisions based upon centuries of consequence, often appearing frustratingly slow or indifferent to the shorter-lived races.

Many humans mistake this patience for arrogance. The elves rarely bother correcting them.

THE BLOOD LANDS

Relations between the High Elves and humanity remain strained. Among themselves, the elves refer to the kingdoms of Keln as *i Agardor*—The Blood Lands.

The name reflects the elves' belief that human civilization is built upon endless cycles of war, ambition, conquest, and mortality. To the High Elves, human kingdoms rise and collapse with alarming speed, their rulers spending countless lives pursuing fleeting glory before inevitably passing into history.

While individual humans may earn elven respect, humanity as a whole is often regarded as tragically shortsighted.

Likewise, many humans consider the elves aloof, prideful, and detached from the realities of the modern world. Neither assessment is entirely inaccurate.

THE CLOSING OF THE BORDERS

Unlike nearly every other nation of the **Middle Sea**, Vala Aedain does not participate in international trade. Foreign merchants are forbidden from entering its borders. Adventurers seeking forgotten ruins are turned away without exception. Travelers who stray too deeply into the forests often disappear without explanation.

The borders of Vala Aedain are watched by several thousand *erynman*, the legendary elven rangers whose skill has become the subject of countless stories. Masters of woodland warfare, they know every trail, stream, and hidden path through the forests. Their ability to move unseen is so great that many trespassers never realize they are being observed until an arrow suddenly appears lodged in the tree before them as a final warning.

Most are simply captured, blindfolded, and escorted beyond the borders. Others, particularly armed intruders or those who threaten the forest itself, are killed swiftly and without ceremony.

THE OLD WAYS

Unlike nearly every civilized nation of the **Middle Sea**, the High Elves worship no gods. They acknowledge that the gods exist and possess immense power, yet they refuse to grant them worship. In elven philosophy, the gods are simply extraordinarily powerful beings dwelling upon other planes—not creators deserving reverence.

Instead, the High Elves devote themselves to what they call the Old Ways, an ancient spiritual tradition centered upon nature itself. Every stream, mountain, forest, season, and living thing forms part of a single harmonious whole.

Druids serve as the keepers of this philosophy, acting as spiritual guides, historians, healers, and protectors of the natural world.

To harm the forest without need is considered among the gravest of sins.

A REALM OF FEY

The boundaries between Vala Aedain and the Fey Realm have grown thin after untold ages. Fairies dance openly beneath moonlit glades. Treants walk ancient groves as honored elders. Dryads speak with elven nobles as equals. Unicorns wander sacred meadows protected by ancient custom.

Many groves are considered holy because the veil separating worlds has become nearly transparent there. Travelers occasionally report witnessing impossible lights drifting between trees, hearing distant laughter with no visible source, or losing entire days while wandering enchanted paths.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

More than any other civilization in the **Middle Sea**, High Elf society is defined by heredity. Because elves commonly live for many centuries, opportunities for advancement arise only rarely. Without some form of structure, positions of authority might remain occupied indefinitely while younger generations languished without purpose.

To preserve stability, the ancient kings established a hereditary caste system whose foundations have remained virtually unchanged

for thousands of years. Every elf is born into a caste. One's place within society is not determined by wealth, military achievement, or personal ambition, but by birth.

Though outsiders often condemn this system as rigid, the elves view it as the natural order that has allowed their civilization to survive while so many others have collapsed.

THE HIRDOR

At the summit of society stand the *Hirdor*, the noble houses and royal bloodlines.

The *Hirdor* govern Vala Aedain, administer its laws, command its armies, and preserve the oldest magical traditions. Their bloodlines possess the strongest natural affinity for arcane magic, and nearly every great wizard, queen, or prince descends from these ancient families.

Only members of the *Hirdor* may legally own slaves, a privilege inherited from ages when elven civilization stretched across much of the known world.

THE ALDARON

Second only to the nobility are the *Aldaron*, the Forest Lords.

The *Aldaron* are druids, wardens, and caretakers entrusted with maintaining the balance of nature. They oversee sacred groves, advise the crown on matters concerning the natural world, and ensure that the forests remain healthy for future generations.

Their authority is immense, and even the Hirdor seldom ignore the counsel of a respected Forest Lord.

THE MAERONS

Below the Aldaron stand the *Maerons*, the artists.

Poets, musicians, sculptors, historians, playwrights, dancers, and storytellers all belong to this honored caste.

The elves believe civilization cannot survive upon warfare and governance alone. Beauty must also endure.

Thus, the Maerons are regarded as the bringers of joy, memory, and inspiration. Their works preserve the triumphs, tragedies, and wisdom of thousands of years, ensuring no generation forgets those that came before.

Many serve in the royal court, where their counsel is valued nearly as highly as that of generals or ministers.

THE ERNYMAN

The *Erynman* are the famed rangers of Vala Aedain.

Serving as scouts, hunters, wardens, and border guardians, they patrol the forests tirelessly, protecting both the realm and its countless fey inhabitants.

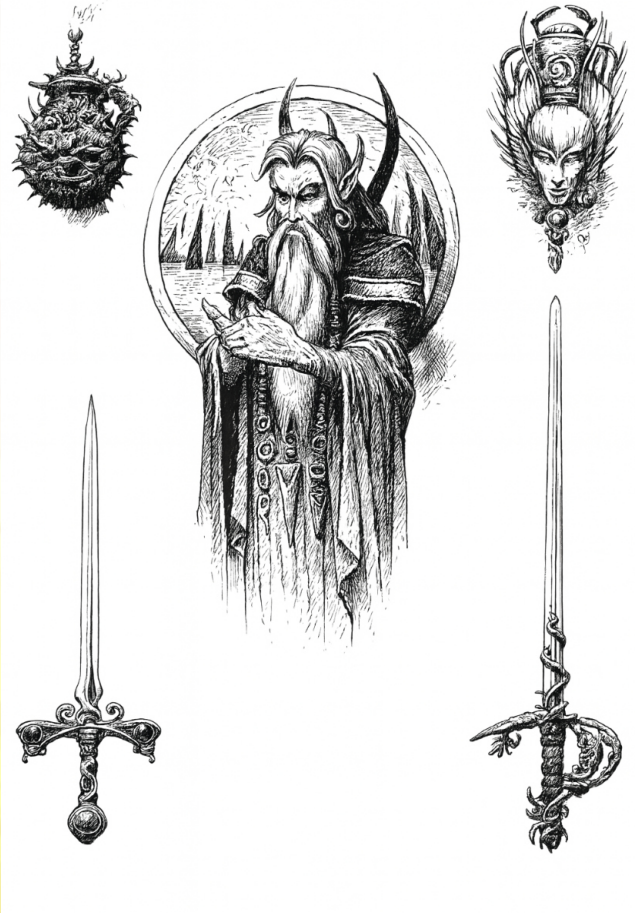
Their discipline and skill have become legendary throughout the **Middle Sea**.

It is said that if an Erynman wishes to remain unseen, even another elf cannot find them.

THE MUDADRAUTH

The craftsmen of Vala Aedain belong to the *Mudadrauth*. Smiths, masons, jewelers, woodworkers, weavers, and countless other artisans devote centuries to mastering their chosen craft. Because an elf may spend three hundred years perfecting a single discipline, their creations often rival magical artifacts in beauty and function.

Much of what humans call "elven magic" is simply craftsmanship beyond mortal comprehension.



THE OHTAR

At the base of free elven society stand the *Ohtar*, the soldiers. Though respected for their service, they occupy the lowest hereditary caste.

Long ago, during the catastrophic end of the Fourth Age, when darkness overwhelmed much of the **Middle Sea**, the High Elves abandoned their western empire of Vala Denai and withdrew to Vala Aedain.

Someone had to remain behind to delay the advancing corruption. That burden fell upon the *Ohtar*. Entire generations of elven soldiers were sacrificed as a rearguard, expected to perish buying time for the evacuation of their people. Against all expectation, many survived.

Cut off from the High Kingdom for centuries, isolated by endless war against the corrupted races of the Thanes, those abandoned soldiers slowly transformed into a new people.

Their descendants are known today as the Denaari, the Wild Elves. The High Elves seldom speak of this chapter in their history.

The Denaari never forgot it.

ARLENCE AND THE FUTURE

For thousands of years Vala Aedain remained almost completely isola ted from the outside world. Only recently has that changed.

The High Elves have begun cultivating increasingly warm diplomatic relations with the Principality of Arlence. Elven nobles have settled among the Eastern Isles, some even rising to the rank of duke and becoming influential magnates within Arlencian society. Trade remains forbidden, yet ambassadors travel freely. Scholars exchange knowledge and political marriages have even been quietly discussed in certain circles. No official explanation has ever been offered for this remarkable shift in policy.

The kings of Keln watch these developments with growing concern, wondering whether they are witnessing the birth of an alliance that could reshape the balance of power throughout the **Middle Sea**. For the High Elves rarely act without purpose. And when they do, they are usually planning centuries ahead.

NPCS

HIGH QUEEN XITHARRA UIAL I ABONNEN: THE QUEEN OF VALA AEDAIN

8th-level elf magic-user

Quiet and withdrawn, the queen has not left her palace in Everdale in nearly 100 years. Only she knows for certain what is troubling her, and she has left the day-to-day affairs of running her kingdom to her brother.

AC 8, **HD** 8 (17hp), **Att** 1 × *dagger +2* (1d4+2), **THACo** 17 (15 with *dagger +2*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D9 W10 P9 B12 S10, **STR** 9 **INT** 16 **WIS** 12 **DEX** 16 **CON** 10 **CHA** 14, **ML** 8, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, staff, **Possessions** *dagger +2, amulet of protection against scrying, ring of water walking,* **Spells** *light, hold portal, sleep, phantasmal force, continual light, fly, clairaudience, plant growth*

CALBAN: FIRST LORD OF VALA AEDAIN, BROTHER OF THE QUEEN

4th-level elf ranger

Calban is the queen's closest advisor and friend. He has assumed responsibility for running the state while his sister hides away in her palace, dwelling on matters that not even he is privy to.

AC -2, **HD** 4 (20hp), **Att** 1 × *longbow +2* (1d8+3), **THACo** 17 (12 with *longbow +2*), **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14, **STR** 13 **INT** 13 **WIS** 11 **DEX** 17 **CON** 13 **CHA** 15, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Longbow, short sword, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Longbow, **Possessions** *longbow +2,* mithral, **Special Abiliti**es Awareness: surprised only on 1-in-6, Foraging and hunting: party succeeds at foraging 2-in-6; finds prey when hunting 5-in-6, Pursuit: when party pursues opposing group in wilderness, evasion chance reduced by 10%, Stealth: 3-in-6 hiding and 3-in-6 moving silently in the wildernessTracking: % chance by level (20% at L1, +10% per level to 100% at L9, then 110%); modifiers: soft/hard ground ±20–50%, group size +2%/creature, tracks mingling –50%, age –5%/12hrs, rainfall –25%/hr, hiding tracks –25%

DAERAKKUS: THE FIRST SPEAR, HEAD OF THE QUEEN'S ROYAL BODYGUARD

5th-level elf fighter

The most loyal and trustworthy of the queen's household guard, Daerakkus has recently been sent out on a mission of some importance for the queen. No one knows what the mission is—not even her own brother—but whispers indicate the very fate of the **Middle Sea** depends on his success.

AC 2, **HD** 5 (35hp), **Att** 1 × spear (1d6+1), **THAC0** 17 (16 with spear), **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12, **STR** 12 **INT** 15 **WIS** 8 **DEX** 11 **CON** 18 **CHA** 11, **ML** 10, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Longbow, spear, sword, two-handed sword, **Specializations** Spear

VALADA: RANGER CAPTAIN

3rd-level elf ranger

A highly capable ranger, Valada has caught the eye of Calban, and the two have secretly fallen in love. Since she is of a lower caste, it is strictly forbidden, but so far the two have managed to keep the affair secret.

AC 5, **HD** 3 (12hp), **Att** 1 × hyanda (1d8+1), **THACo** 19 (18 with hyanda), **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16, **STR** 10 **INT** 13 **WIS** 15 **DEX** 11 **CON** 15 **CHA** 13, **ML** 9, **AL** Lawful, **Weapon Proficiencies** Dagger, longbow, sword, **Specializations** Sword, **Special Abilities** Awareness: surprised only on 1-in-6, Foraging and hunting: party succeeds at foraging 2-in-6; finds prey when hunting 5-in-6, Pursuit: when party pursues opposing group in wilderness, evasion chance reduced by 10%, Stealth: 3-in-6 hiding and 3-in-6 moving silently in the wildernessTracking: % chance by level (20% at L1, +10% per level to 100% at L9, then 110%); modifiers: soft/hard ground ±20–50%, group size +2%/creature, tracks mingling –50%, age –5%/12hrs, rainfall –25%/hr, hiding tracks –25%

UNITS

The high elves can call upon a force of over 100,000 soldiers, 75,000 druids, plus another 10 units (3,000) rangers. In addition, every member of the noble class—some 50,000 strong—are spellcasters. Below is the most common non-spellcasting unit available in Vala Aedain.

ELVEN ARCHERS
TOTAL TROOPS: 100 **HD**: 1
TOTAL HD: 100
MV: 30' **DAMAGE**: 1d6 (spear)
QUALITY: Average
FOOT TYPE: Light Foot
CATEGORY: Skirmisher
ABILITIES: Longbowmen
POA: +0
CIRCUMSTANTIAL POAs:
Longbow vs. Skirmishers/Mob: +4
Longbow vs. Light Foot: +3
Longbow vs. Medium Foot: +2
Longbow vs. Heavy Foot: +1

THE LANDS OF KA-LI

Far to the south of the Empire of Nethia lie the vast and ancient lands of **Ka-Li**, a realm of countless kingdoms, warring dynasties, forgotten temples, mist-shrouded mountains, and endless frontiers. Unlike the great centralized empires of the west, Ka-Li has never existed as a single unified nation. Instead, it is a land of competing states, each ruled by kings, emperors, warlords, and noble houses who claim ancient rights to rule.

For thousands of years, the people of Ka-Li have built magnificent cities, mastered the arts of war, cultivated philosophies of honor and duty, and created some of the greatest works of architecture, poetry, and magic known throughout the **Middle Sea**. Yet beneath this refinement lies a world of constant conflict. Kingdoms rise and fall with astonishing speed, dynasties are overthrown, and armies march endlessly across the countryside seeking conquest and glory.

To outsiders, Ka-Li is a land of contradictions. It is a place where a warrior may spend decades perfecting a single sword technique while a sorcerer destroys an entire city with forbidden magic. It is a realm where gardens are carefully arranged to represent harmony with nature while armies burn villages only a few miles away. It is a civilization of beauty and brutality existing side by side.

THE AGE OF WARRING KINGDOMS

The history of Ka-Li is defined by cycles of unity and division. At various points in history, powerful rulers have conquered vast portions of the region, claiming the title of emperor and attempting to bring peace through absolute rule. Yet these great kingdoms rarely endure. Upon the death of a strong ruler, rival generals, noble families, and ambitious princes often begin fighting for control, plunging the land back into chaos. The current age is one such period.

Hundreds of small kingdoms, city-states, and territories now compete for influence. Some are little more than fortified valleys ruled by local warlords. Others possess enormous armies, wealthy cities, and ancient royal bloodlines stretching back centuries.

The rulers of these lands are known by many titles: kings, princes, daimyo, governors, and emperors. Among the common people, however, the most feared and respected are the **warlords**—lords who personally command armies and maintain their power through military strength. A weak ruler rarely survives long in Ka-Li. A strong ruler may carve out an empire.

THE WARRIOR NOBILITY

The warriors of Ka-Li occupy a position unlike anywhere else in the **Middle Sea**. War is not merely a profession. It is a tradition. It is an art. The noble warrior class, known throughout much of Ka-Li as the *samurai*, serves as the backbone of the armies of the great houses. Trained from childhood in swordsmanship, archery, strategy, and philosophy, samurai are expected to embody discipline and loyalty.

Their most famous weapon is the curved single-edged sword known as the katana, a blade believed by many Ka-Lian warriors to possess a spiritual connection to its wielder. The finest swords are forged over months or even years by master smiths who treat the creation of a blade as a sacred act. A samurai's reputation is everything.

A warrior who loses honor may find death preferable to disgrace. Yet the reality of Ka-Lian warfare is often far more complicated than the stories told by poets. Samurai may be noble defenders of their people, ruthless conquerors, mercenaries serving whoever pays them, or ambitious warriors seeking to establish their own domains.

NINJA AND THE SHADOW WARS

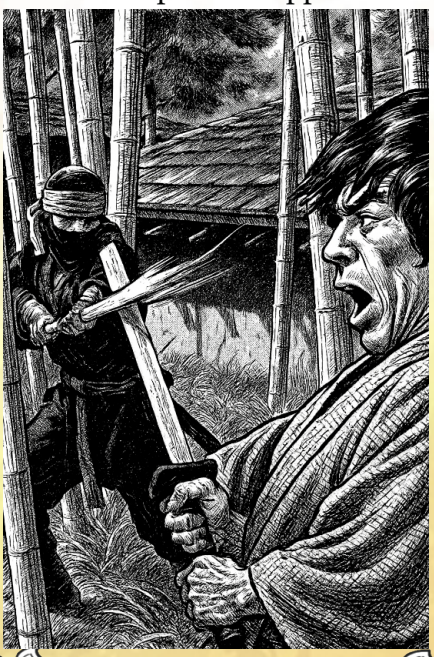
Where the samurai represent open warfare, the ninja represent the hidden battles fought behind the scenes.

Ninja clans are secretive organizations specializing in espionage, assassination, sabotage, infiltration, and unconventional warfare. Some serve powerful lords as spies and agents. Others operate independently, selling their skills to the highest bidder. To many nobles, ninja are dishonorable criminals. To others, they are simply another weapon in the endless

struggle for power.

A ninja may spend years disguised as a servant within an enemy palace, gathering secrets one whispered conversation at a time. They may poison a rival's food, burn a fortress's supplies, or eliminate a general before a battle even begins.

Many legends claim ninja possess supernatural abilities, though the truth is difficult to determine. Some are certainly skilled warriors and spies. Others are rumored to practice forbidden magic, allowing them to disappear into smoke, walk upon water, or assume another person's appearance.



SORCERERS OF KA-LI

Magic is far more accepted in Ka-Li than in many northern lands.

While the kingdoms of Keln often view magic with suspicion, the people of Ka-Li have long incorporated sorcery into philosophy, warfare, medicine, and government.

Great sorcerers serve as advisors to kings, interpreters of omens, and guardians of ancient secrets. Some command storms, speak with spirits, summon creatures from other realms, or bind powerful beings into their service.

The greatest magical traditions are preserved within ancient schools hidden among mountains, temples, and forgotten forests.

However, magic is also feared.

The most infamous sorcerers are those who abandon wisdom in pursuit of immortality and power. These dark masters often create armies of undead, summon demons, or awaken forces better left forgotten. Throughout Ka-Li, parents warn their children:

"A sword may kill one person. A sorcerer may slay a kingdom."

THE DRAGONS OF KA-LI

Nowhere in the **Middle Sea** are dragons more revered than in Ka-Li. While northern civilizations often view dragons as monsters to be slain or treasures to be claimed, the people of Ka-Li understand dragons as ancient beings of immense wisdom and spiritual significance.

Dragons are believed to embody the forces of nature itself. They are associated with rivers, storms, mountains, and the changing seasons. Many temples contain carvings and paintings of dragons, and rulers often claim descent from ancient dragon spirits to legitimize their authority.

An emperor who gains the favor of a dragon is believed to possess the blessing of heaven itself. A ruler who angers one risks bringing disaster upon his entire realm.

Some dragons dwell in remote mountains, ancient lakes, or hidden valleys, rarely interacting with mortals. Others have been known to advise kings, challenge warriors, or bargain with sorcerers.

The greatest dragons are said to be older than human civilization itself.

THE JADE COURTS

The cities of Ka-Li are among the greatest in the world. Massive walls surround sprawling urban centers filled with palaces, temples, markets, gardens, and universities. Wealthy nobles live in elegant estates decorated with paintings, calligraphy, and carefully designed gardens.

The imperial courts are places of incredible beauty and incredible danger.

A single misplaced word may end a family's fortunes. A marriage alliance may determine the fate of thousands. A poet's insult may begin a war.

THE LOTUS LANDS

Throughout Ka-Li, the lotus flower holds profound cultural importance.

Lotus gardens surround temples, palaces, and monasteries. The flower represents purity, enlightenment, rebirth, and the ability to rise above suffering.

However, not all lotus traditions are peaceful.

Deep in the jungles of southern Ka-Li grow rare and powerful varieties of lotus plants used in medicine, poison, and magic. The most infamous of these are the black and crimson lotuses, whose properties are sought by assassins, sorcerers, and alchemists.
Entire wars have been fought over control of these rare plants. The jungels crawl with goblinoid tribes, serpentmen, and creatures far more terrifying.

THE SOUTHERN JUNGLES AND THE SERPENT MEN

Beyond the civilized kingdoms lie vast tropical jungles where ancient ruins disappear beneath the roots of enormous trees.

These regions are home to the serpent men, an ancient and mysterious race whose civilization predates many human kingdoms.

The serpent men are feared throughout Ka-Li as practitioners of dark magic and possessors of forgotten knowledge. Their cities are hidden among jungle temples, where enormous stone serpents coil around crumbling pyramids and forgotten altars.

Human kingdoms often launch expeditions into these jungles seeking lost treasures and magical secrets. Few return. Those who do often speak of impossible creatures, strange sorceries, and ruins that seem to move when no one is watching.

THE DESERT KINGDOMS

To the west of Ka-Li's great forests lies a vast desert region inhabited by fierce nomadic peoples.

Unlike the refined courts and ancient cities of Ka-Li, the desert clans value strength, endurance, and personal freedom above all else. Their warriors ride across endless sands, surviving where few outsiders could.

Many desert tribes are organized around powerful chieftains whose authority comes from reputation rather than inheritance. A leader who grows weak may quickly find himself replaced by a stronger rival.

The desert peoples are often viewed as barbarians by the kingdoms of the east. They consider themselves the only people truly free.

Their warriors are renowned for their skill with curved blades, mounted combat, and survival in some of the harshest lands in the world.

EVERYDAY LIFE

While the wars of kings and the ambitions of warlords dominate the histories of Ka-Li, the overwhelming majority of its people are simple farmers, fishermen, craftsmen, monks, merchants, and laborers. Their concerns are not conquest or politics, but the rhythm of the seasons, the health of their families, and whether this year's harvest will be enough to see them through the winter.

Rice is the foundation of life throughout much of Ka-Li. Endless terraces climb mountain slopes while broad paddies stretch across fertile river valleys, their flooded fields reflecting the sky like polished mirrors. Wheat, millet, tea, soybeans, vegetables, and fruit are also widely cultivated, while coastal communities depend heavily upon fishing. In the warmer southern jungles, bananas, coconuts, sugarcane, and countless exotic spices flourish.

Most people live in villages of a few hundred souls governed by a local magistrate, village elder, or the steward of a nearby noble. Homes are typically built of timber, plaster, and stone foundations, with gently sloping tiled or thatched roofs designed to withstand the heavy seasonal rains. Entire generations of the same family often live beneath one roof, with grandparents, parents, children, and cousins sharing both labor and responsibility.

The family is considered the cornerstone of society. Great respect is shown to parents, grandparents, teachers, and community elders, whose wisdom is believed to have been earned through long experience. To openly insult one's parents or refuse proper respect to one's ancestors is considered among the gravest social disgraces.

Although every kingdom has its own customs, education is highly valued throughout Ka-Li. Even the children of farmers are often taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic by village priests, monks, or retired scholars. Among the nobility, mastery of history, poetry, music, painting, and calligraphy is considered every bit as important as martial skill. A ruler unable to appreciate beauty is often judged unfit to govern.

Markets form the beating heart of everyday commerce. Every few days merchants arrive with brightly painted wagons or river barges laden with silk, ceramics, spices, lacquerware, paper, tea, medicines, fine steel, carved jade, and countless regional specialties. Traveling performers, storytellers, fortune tellers, herbalists, and wandering monks frequently accompany these markets, transforming ordinary trade into lively festivals.

Tea houses are found in nearly every town and village. More than places to drink, they serve as gathering places where merchants negotiate contracts, scholars debate philosophy,

travelers exchange news, and old friends pass the afternoon playing strategy games. Many important political alliances have begun over a quiet pot of tea rather than upon a battlefield.

The roads of Ka-Li are among the busiest in the world. Merchant caravans, pilgrims, tax collectors, monks, soldiers, wandering swordsmen, and itinerant performers constantly travel between settlements. Small roadside inns provide food, lodging, and stables, while larger post towns maintain government stations where official messengers can exchange horses and continue their journeys without delay.

Religion and philosophy permeate daily life, though not always in the form of organized worship. Families maintain household shrines honoring ancestors, local spirits, or revered teachers. Seasonal festivals celebrate the planting and harvest, the coming of spring, and the turning of the year with lanterns, music, feasting, and public performances. Even the poorest villages pause their labors to celebrate these occasions, believing that joy itself brings harmony to the community.

Despite these comforts, life remains difficult. Floods, droughts, earthquakes, and famine periodically devastate entire provinces. Bandits prey upon isolated roads, while wars between rival lords can sweep across peaceful farming villages with little warning. It is not uncommon for a peasant to spend years rebuilding a home destroyed by armies that had no quarrel with him.

Yet the people of Ka-Li endure. They have survived countless dynasties, invasions, and civil wars, trusting that kingdoms may rise and fall, but the rice must still be planted, the children must still be raised, and the seasons will always return. This quiet resilience, more than the victories of emperors or the legends of heroes, has allowed the civilization of Ka-Li to flourish for thousands of years.

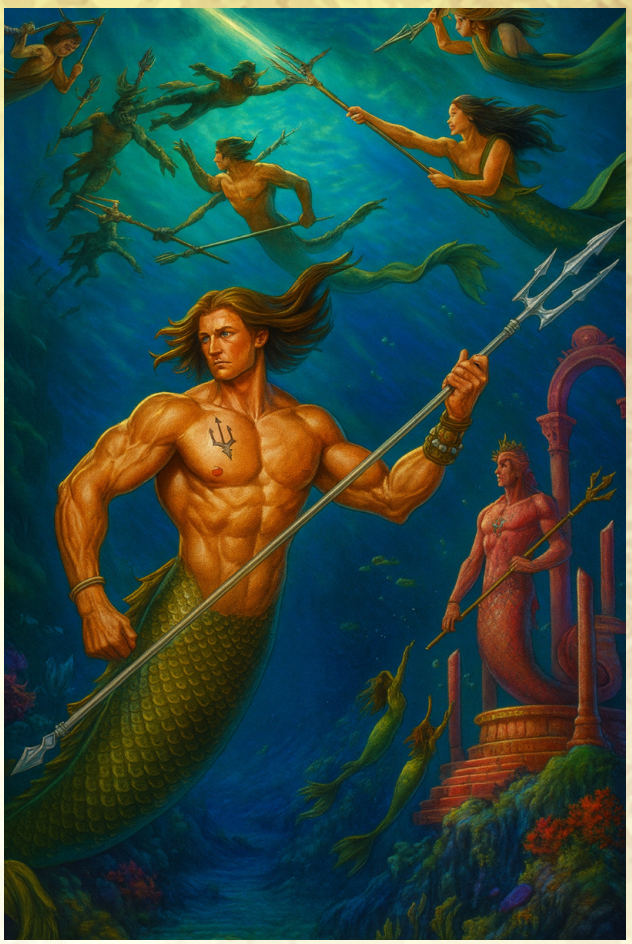
WOOT

VALA NERAI

Beneath the waters of the Middle Sea lies the hidden realm of Vala Nerai, an ancient undersea kingdom inhabited by sea elves, tritons, and merfolk. Though the surface world knows little of its existence, Vala Nerai is every bit as old and sophisticated as the greatest civilizations above the waves. Its coral cities, crystal palaces, and forests of giant kelp stretch across the sea floor, illuminated by glowing algae and magical pearls that cast a perpetual twilight beneath the ocean.

The people of Vala Nerai seldom interfere in the affairs of surface kingdoms, though they maintain peaceful relations with coastal communities, particularly those of Arlence, where trade between sea folk and surface merchants has become increasingly common. Pearls, enchanted coral, rare shells, and treasures recovered from ancient shipwrecks are exchanged for finely crafted metalwork, textiles, tools, and other goods unavailable beneath the sea.

The greatest threat to Vala Nerai is the sahuagin, savage sea devils who inhabit the darkest trenches and drowned caverns of the **Middle Sea**. For untold centuries, the sahuagin have waged an unrelenting war against the civilized peoples of the deep, launching raids upon coastal settlements, attacking merchant vessels, and seeking to conquer the undersea realm. Though the armies of Vala Nerai have thus far held them at bay, the conflict is as ancient as memory, and few believe it will ever truly end.



AFTERWARD

I hope you enjoyed this journey through the **Middle Sea**! The next two books I plan for this series will be the Monster Manual and the Adventure Path. But, those will probably be a ways off. As time of this writing it's July 28th, 2026. I don't expect either of these to be completed before 2027 (and perhaps even later than that).

In the meantime, be sure to check out the Nerd Hub for more nerdy greatness!